DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 345 CE 076 100

AUTHOR Green, Muriel; Milbourne, Linda
TITLE Making Learning Support Work.
INSTITUTION Further Education Development Agency, London (England).
ISSN ISSN-1361-9977
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 63p.
AVAILABLE FROM Further Education Development Agency, Publications Dept., Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS40 7RG, United Kingdom (7.50 pounds).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
JOURNAL CIT FE Matters; v2 n6 1998
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Programs; *Adult Students; Check Lists; *Counseling Effectiveness; *Counseling Services; *Counseling Techniques; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Needs; Educational Strategies; Financial Support; Foreign Countries; Models; National Surveys; Needs Assessment; Postsecondary Education; Program Evaluation; Questionnaires; *School Counseling; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Systems Approach; Technical Institutes; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This report, which is written for curriculum managers, student services managers, and learning support managers in further education (FE) colleges throughout the United Kingdom, summarizes and examines the results of a study in which eight FE colleges worked with the Further Education Development Agency to evaluate different approaches to learning support. ("Learning support" is defined as any activity beyond a college program's prescribed content that contributes to individual students' attendance, retention, learning, and achievement.) The following topics are among those discussed: summary of the study findings (strategy, culture, and organization; take-up of support; liaison; models; information, outcomes); role and context of learning support and catalysts for learning support; management of learning support (strategy, policy, key issues); models of learning support (initial needs assessment, learning centers, specialist workshops, tutorials and active guidance, partnership teaching, differentiation in teaching, specialist in-class support, ever-changing models); methods of funding learning support (centralized and college support); central systems for learning support (information systems, quality, staff development); and evaluation of learning support (methods, key issues, future developments). Twelve tables/figures are included. The bibliography contains 16 references. Appended are the following: staff questionnaire; course checklist; self-assessment checklist regarding Advanced (A-level) studies; staffing chart; and study center questionnaire. (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

ED 417 345

Making learning support work

Muriel Green and Linda Milbourne

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S Bourne
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

Making learning support work

Muriel Green and Linda Milbourne

FE matters

3

Published by the **Further Education Development Agency** (FEDA), Dumbarton House, 68 Oxford Street, London W1N 0DA
Tel: [0171] 436 0020 Fax: [0171] 436 0349

Feedback and orders should be directed to:
Publications Department, FEDA,
Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS40 7RG
Tel: [01761] 462 503 Fax: [01761] 463 140

Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Editor: **Lorraine Mullaney**

Designer: **Mike Pope**

Printed by: **Blackmore Limited**

Cover photograph: **Barry College**

ISSN: 1361-9977

© 1998 FEDA

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the copyright owner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my colleague, Sally Faraday, who worked with me to manage the project and to Linda Milbourne, our consultant, who both helped us support college developments and produced the comprehensive end of project report which formed a firm basis for this publication.

FEDA thanks the following colleges that contributed to our work on initial assessment practice:

- Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology
- Huddersfield New College
- Hull College
- Lewisham College, London
- Llandrillo College, North Wales
- Loughborough College
- People's College of Tertiary Education, Nottingham
- Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muriel Green has had a range of roles and responsibilities in all sectors of education. She joined the staff of the former FEU from an advisor/inspector role in Leicestershire where she had been a member of the LEA's assessment team. Her work has focused particularly on learner and learning support and she is currently managing a QCA-funded project on Initial Assessment, once again working with Dave Bartram. Her recent publications include *Additional support, retention and guidance in urban colleges* (FEDA, 1997) and *Initial assessment to identify learners' needs* (FEDA, 1998).

Linda Milbourne is a freelance consultant and trainer in management, social policy and education. A former college Principal, she has worked in further education and training in inner city areas for the last 20 years. She has been responsible for a variety of educational innovations and major curriculum and organisational change. Linda has also worked as a registered inspector for the Further Education Funding council. As a consultant she has undertaken research on vocational education and training for the London Borough of Hackney Task Force; on governance and management for the Further Education Development Agency; and has provided research and consultancy for community education project work in South Africa.

Contents

1 **Introduction** 4

2 **Summary of the findings** 5
Strategy, culture and organisation
Take-up of support
Liasion
Models
Information
Outcomes

3 **The role and context of learning support** 7
What do we mean by 'learning support'?
Catalysts for learning support developments

4 **Management of learning support: college strategy, organisation and culture** 10
Strategy and policy
Organising learning support
Different approaches to learning support
Changing the college culture
Management, strategy and culture
Key issues

5 **Models of learning support** 17
Initial assessment to identify learning support needs
Learning centres
Specialist workshops
Learning support through tutorials and active guidance
Partnership teaching
Differentiation in teaching
Specialist in-class support
Ever-changing models
Key issues

6 **Funding learning support** 25
Learning support and the FEFC funding mechanism
College funding for learning support
Accommodation and materials
Staffing
Key issues

7 **Central systems for learning support** 30
Information systems
Quality
Staff development
Key issues

8 **Getting a measure of learning support** 37
Results of initial assessment
Take-up of learning support
Learning support accommodation
Provision integral to programmes
Effect of learning support on student retention
Learning support and student achievement
Value of learning support
Value of different models
Key issues
Future developments

9 **Recommendations** 43

10 **References** 44

Appendices 45
1 Additional support – staff questionnaire 45
2 Course checklist 48
3 A-level studies – self-assessment checklist 53
4 Staffing chart 54
5 Study centre questionnaire 55

1 Introduction

This report focuses on learning support. It is written for curriculum managers, student services managers and learning support managers in further education colleges. It draws on the experience and findings of eight colleges which worked with FEDA to evaluate different approaches to learning support. The colleges were representative of the sector as a whole and demonstrated a good regional spread while including a large inner city college, a sixth form college and a college in Wales.

Two of the eight colleges taking part in the work were involved in major reorganisation during the life of the project and all of the colleges had to cope with a rapid pace of change, pressure of work and some lack of stability so it is to their credit that they were able to give much energy and commitment to complete and report on the research and development work which makes this publication possible.

The guidance and approaches outlined in this publication are crucial to securing real college improvement and the vision of a learning society outlined in the Fryer Report: *Learning for the twenty-first century*.

2 Summary of the findings

FEDA's project colleges provided a wide range of information and evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of the learning support they developed and delivered. The variety of models and strategies the colleges designed to meet student learning needs are shown in Figure 2 on page 12. A varied presentation of outcomes resulted, some measured, some evaluative and others in the form of case studies. However, a common message emerging from all institutions is that learning support extends beyond that which is resourced through the FEFC's additional funding units.

Current developments represent a phase of growth in learning support influenced by external pressures and internal forces:

- a change to new client groups with new learning issues to address
- the impetus to assess all students as they enter the college
- the need to improve completion, achievement and progression rates for students
- increased funding where learning support can be encompassed within the FEFC's criteria for additional learning support units.

Further education colleges are witnessing, not simply a massive development in cross-curricular areas of work pervasive to all programmes, but in the long-term, a re-evaluation of the autonomy of the learner and of what comprises successful learning strategies. At its most effective, learning support secures the learner's access to effective learning through the mainstream curriculum the learner follows.

Colleges in the study all demonstrate that learning support is making a difference to those students who have been able, or have chosen, to take it up. The aspects of effective learning support identified are listed below.

Strategy, culture and organisation

- Successful learning support involves a responsive and flexible approach, where specialist support team staff decide on the most appropriate model of support with programme teams and students.
- Learning support is more likely to achieve success where the institutional culture has moved towards an appreciation of educational entitlement and inclusiveness for the learner, and away from past models of withdrawal for remedial help.
- Learning support which is integral to the programme but specific in addressing identified needs will be more likely to be taken up and valued by students.
- The most effective teams of cross-college support specialists are drawn from all areas of the college which can contribute relevant experience.
- Effective learning support relies on explicit staff development (formal and informal) in all the colleges involved. Most colleges indicate that significant development work is still required.
- Effective learning support involves an evaluative approach which can amend, develop or consolidate aspects of delivery and organisation.

Take-up of support

- Initial assessment processes identify significant numbers of students as having learning support needs but much lower numbers actually take up learning support provision.
- Take-up of learning support is generally greater when support is delivered within the programme.

Liaison

- Good liaison between learning support specialists and programme teams enables support to be targeted at the needs of individuals and relevant to the demands of the curriculum followed.
- The best examples of liaison have been demonstrated where staff were able to develop rapport, build strong relationships and clear channels of communication.
- Formally recognised college links between specialist support teams and programme areas promote greater recognition and value for support services for staff and students.

Models

- Partnership teaching and support within the programme are identified as particularly effective in ensuring student take-up and attendance of both integrated and discrete learning support provision.
- Specialist workshops are most effective when support is sharply focused to offer help which is specific to both student needs and the demands of the programme.
- Learning centres which have been effective in promoting a positive image of their role in helping build for success will be more able to attract students for support.
- Skilled tutors can be highly effective in enabling students to manage their own learning, meet deadlines, make progress and achieve learning goals.

Information

- Successful models include clear and consistent systems, for example, for tracking and recording, and also allow for diversity in approaches to delivery of learning support.
- Colleges most able to evaluate effectiveness through measurable outcomes have good access to central computerised management information systems or systems dedicated to learning support.

Outcomes

- Students receiving learning support attained better rates of retention and achievement.
- Students and staff involved in learning support were generally positive about the effectiveness of the support, especially in relation to ongoing achievements.

3 The role and context of learning support

What do we mean by 'learning support'?

Learning support can encompass any activity, beyond the prescribed 'content' of the college programme, which will contribute to an individual student's attendance, retention, learning and achievement. In some cases it will be integral to the programme; in others additional. Learning support must involve a college in meeting all the learning needs identified both through initial assessment processes and from the continuous review of student progress.

Learning support is defined by its current range and practice. Each project college finds its own definitions and boundaries, and shapes its rationale by its own history and expertise. Each has also developed strategies in response to the combined, and sometimes contradictory, effects of national initiatives, institutional culture and local needs.

The aim for most colleges is to match the learning environment and learning strategy to the student through appropriate provision and resources. Learning support is broader than basic skills help, key skills help, or help with a specific difficulty, such as dyslexia. It may well extend beyond learning funded through additional support units. Support in information technology and a range of study skills to help students (including those on higher level programmes) to become more active and independent learners, is likely to fall outside fundable categories for additional support units.

A high level of interest has been generated in learning support work. Many colleges have diverted significant energy and resources into establishing college-wide systems of support, learning centres and detailed student tracking systems. Those colleges which, over a number of years, have persevered with study skills, language and mathematics workshops for students who were struggling to make the grade, are now finding they are back in fashion. In the past, financial restrictions often led to the closure of such 'extra' provision.

Financial incentives, together with the logic of helping those learners who could reach their goals with the right support, have had an impact on the further education sector. A myriad of different strategies and approaches to providing learning support are evolving. They are being tried, tested, improved and, to some degree, included in strategic planning. This implies a significant shift in culture and learning strategy for many colleges. We look now at the catalysts for change.

Catalysts for learning support developments

The most direct influence on learning support is the impact of the FEFC, especially through the funding methodology and the earlier pressure on colleges to grow. Colleges keen to recruit more and different learners recognise that growth inevitably leads to a change in the student profile, a possible increase in the numbers of non-traditional students and a need to work harder to support students appropriately, so that they are able to make positive progress towards their stated learning goals. Improving retention and achievement has a high priority in all colleges and there is demonstrable value in making an early assessment of needs so learners can be provided with the level and type of support which will mitigate against poor attendance, missed deadlines, lack of progress/achievement and eventually, drop out.

A significant factor which has influenced developments in learning support is the fact that for the first time nationally, a number of aspects of learning support provision attract funding directly in the form of additional learning support units. However, funding is recorded against the cost of an individual's additional learning needs. In the words of one college project manager:

> *Additional learning support potentially contributes to a view of literacy/learning as an individual issue only.*

This flies in the face of reality for many colleges where a large proportion of learners are identified through initial assessment processes as needing support. In some cases 70% of those screened using Basic Skills Agency (BSA) materials were achieving below Level 1. This should make learning support a whole institutional issue requiring a whole college

strategy and policy with the associated curriculum and staff development needed to ensure that policy becomes practice.

Development work on national curriculum and qualifications frameworks has been influential. The Dearing Report (1996) underlines the need to develop Key Skills and appropriate strategies to encourage progression for underachievers, also considering areas such as non-completion and the high numbers of young people who have not achieved 'entry level'. NCVQ have re-specified the Key Skills for introduction in 1999 and development has emphasised learning support strategies and the need to underpin skill areas. FEDA has promoted a range of development work on Key Skills and on Learning to Learn.

In 1996 there was a remarkable number of national commissions and reports concerned with improving participation and educational performance: *Lifetime learning* (DfEE), *Success against the odds* (NCE), *Worlds apart?* (Reynolds and Farrell); and a series of studies on literacy and reading achievement: *Reading performance* (Brooks *et al*), *The teaching of reading* (Basic Skills Agency), *Reading in recession* (Gorman and Fernandez). While some studies particularly reflect outcomes in schools, the implications for the post-school sector are clear, both in terms of basic skills, learning needs and in terms of learning strategies which will help students learn how to learn. Nationally supported literacy projects influenced by successful American models have also been the focus of attention for the DfEE, who have sought to consult a range of national advisory agencies on the most appropriate curriculum for all future teacher trainees. Identifying strategies which will improve levels of basic skills achievement has gained a high profile.

The further education sector, not surprisingly, has responded to the multiple pressures of the market and engaged in a range of activities to identify and provide for learning support needs. Annual revision of National Training and Education Targets (NTETs) has stressed development needs in a number of colleges in this area, both for learning support and for a systematic foundation level offer. Qualifications that contribute towards NTETs remain beyond the reach of many learners in colleges, even with support.

The current emphasis on student entitlement, promoted through Student Charters in a developing, 'client-centred' culture mirrors the message of inclusiveness stressed by the FEFC Committee, chaired by Professor John Tomlinson. For a number of colleges, expertise in supporting individual learning needs has developed from support provided for those with specific learning difficulties or disabilities. Work undertaken in responding to Inclusive Learning has been influential in a broader development strategy with recognition of the student's entitlement to support formally stated through College Charters.

Advocates of learning support have always asserted its worth but little has been done to demonstrate its value and its impact on learning outcomes. Despite the many influences leading to development and expansion of this area, and its adoption by some as a key component to college survival, the changes remain precarious. Practitioners of learning support must demonstrate its effectiveness, not least that it contributes measurably to learning outcomes, in order to affect serious changes in learning strategies and to embed it in the infrastructure of the sector. Indeed, the Basic Skills Agency has carried out its own research which clearly demonstrates that support for basic skills improves retention and achievement.

The report from FEFC's Widening Participation Committee led by Helena Kennedy provides a strong lever for change. The report, *Learning works: widening participation in further education* (Kennedy, 1997a) recognises that 'learning is central to economic success and social cohesion' and that 'widening participation means increasing access to learning'. Learning support in its widest sense, has a critical role to play in enabling this 'increased access'. Indeed, in September 1997, the FEFC published Kennedy's report, *How to widen participation: a guide to good practice* (Kennedy, 1997b) which sets out standards and key recommendations for effective support for learning, as laid out in Figure 1 on the next page.

Helena Kennedy says: 'The case for widening participation is irresistible.' In publishing our report on different approaches to learning support, FEDA seeks to help colleges improve the effectiveness of their support for learning, in a move to respond positively to the Kennedy and Tomlinson agendas and to the policy priorities of the new Government.

Figure 1: FEFC recommendations for effective support for learning

Needs of learner	Role of provider	Standards for colleges	Evidence
Help to identify own strengths and weaknesses of learners and develop an action plan	Ensure learning support needs of learners from under-represented groups	The learning support needs of learners from under-represented groups are systematically assessed on all programmes	Summaries of the support needs of learners from under-represented groups
Opportunities to remedy weaknesses through additional tuition or practice	Effectively support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream and separate specialist programmes	Strategies are in place to meet the learning support needs of those learners	Policies and strategies for college-wide learning support and evaluations of learning support and tutorial programme-
Access to personal support	Create a tutorial system which meets the needs of all learners Provide access to professional counselling	The effectiveness of learning support for learners from under-represented groups is evaluated including the use of learners' views	Learners' individual support plans Learners' individual action plans, tutorial policy and framework
Individual meetings with tutor to review progress	Monitor the effectiveness of learning support	All learners are satisfied with the quality of support they receive	Summary records of counselling services

Key recommendations

- Learning support needs should be identified in ways which are not threatening and which do not suggest that learners are inadequate.
- Plans for support should include building on strengths.
- Learners should be actively involved in planning how they are supported and participate in reviewing arrangements.
- Colleges should not assume that certain types of learners need support as they may not.
- Support should be tailored to meet individual needs; plans should be made to equip learners with the skills to use support materials independently and to move beyond the need for additional learning support.

(FEFC, 1997)

4 Management of learning support: college strategy, organisation and culture

A traditional mission of further education is to cater for those who have underachieved in their prior educational experience. This has broadened and become more prominent as colleges have grown. The history of the development of learning support strategies varied among FEDA's project colleges. One college was in its first year of implementation, while some other colleges had developed strategies from a tradition of providing for a wide range of underachieving students for whom workshops in study and basic skills support had been available.

Whereas previously this had been experienced as 'against the grain' of college strategy and culture and in the face of resource cuts, learning support is now recognised as a strategic development issue at college and national level. Delivering a whole college entitlement to learning support in response to identified needs goes beyond the additional support offered to individuals by dint of the FEFC's additional funding units. As Helena Kennedy recognises:

> *Attracting and keeping those for whom learning is a daunting experience is hard work and financially unrewarding. The effort and resources required to support such students on courses receives insufficient recognition in the current funding system.*
>
> *(Kennedy, 1997a)*

Strategy and policy

Overriding themes in all college strategies include the need for flexibility and a diversity of approaches to the delivery of support provision. Learning support must be matched to the needs of students and their programmes, backed up by good liaison, clear tracking systems and appropriate resources. In general, the more developed the strategy, the more divergent the range of approaches, and the greater the concentration of programme-specific approaches. All the colleges identified the aim of increasing the integration of support to ensure the take-up and effectiveness of support to a wider range of students. Evidence emerging from the project indicates that support which is both integrated into the programme but is specific in addressing identified support needs is not only taken up and valued by learners but it also has a positive impact on retention and achievement.

Most colleges use an initial assessment process to identify levels of literacy and numeracy skills at entry. In many instances consideration of aggregate data confirms that needs cannot be met by specialist staff working with individuals, or even small groups of students. The high volume of needs identified should be considered by senior managers involved in strategic planning at whole institutional level as needs can seldom be met and funded entirely through additional support units.

One project college serves a large inner city area and has a history of offering both foundation level and basic skills work to young people and adults, including those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. A high proportion of students are unemployed. The volume of needs identified at initial screening for basic skills support is about 75%. A second example is a college in an area where the GCSE grade profile for 16-year-olds who might enter further education indicates attainment levels at 9% below the national average. This college competes with other post-16 providers and screening at entry identifies about 50% of college entrants as needing support.

The use of learning support as a whole college strategy to address the volume of needs, along with poor retention and achievement, is a significant issue in these two examples. It is also significant for the colleges in the project with a particular emphasis on A-level work, where support for key skills and study skills has been a key part of the college strategy. Those colleges in the project with a strong history of providing for learners with specific learning difficulties or disabilities have drawn attention in their strategy to the cultural struggle to overcome a model implying deficit, to move to one of inclusiveness and student entitlement.

> *Our strategy is to encourage staff to have a positive perception of learning support as a resource which can enhance the performance and achievement of all students, rather than a remedial model.*

This statement from one college is echoed in the strategy and principles outlined by all the FEDA project colleges. The implementation of a whole college strategy will be supported by a clearly communicated and commonly understood college policy.

Organising learning support

The extent to which development has been strategically initiated, or developed outwards from the work of specialist practitioners has varied from college to college. Each college has a strategy which is supported and promoted by a specific team or through a cross-college structure and, for most, is recorded in policy statements. Advice emerging from one college report includes:

> *Share power and resources wherever you can, let programme leaders try out their ideas with you for support. Use what is there and don't get locked into policies and definitions which restrict the range of things you can do. Basic Skills is only part of the support students will need but if you allow it to define your agenda it will limit the range and scope of what you can do.*

All the colleges have identified a learning support team, generally led by a manager or co-ordinator for learning support. Teams vary in numbers but can include staff with a range of roles and responsibilities including:

- tutors
- learning advisors
- learning centre managers and staff
- key skills co-ordinators and specialist staff
- English and Maths staff
- basic skills staff
- section 11 staff
- library staff.

Most teams are organised on a cross-college basis, some have devolved budgets which are informed by the volume of additional support units drawn down from the FEFC. However, a number of learning support team members are also both key skills and vocational tutors in programme teams, and play an important link role in developing learning support in particular programme areas.

Those colleges whose learning support managers have direct access to, and support from, a senior manager, generally experience a greater level of development support. Overt and 'real' management support has been shown to be effective in widely promoting a corporate mission and values; and ensures the quality of internal marketing which is essential to the successful integration of learning support. In this context needs are recognised and responded to with greater flexibility, for example through caseloading, partnership teaching, buddy systems and other approaches which make demands on planners, staff time and other resources. Senior management involvement also tends to encourage a more demonstrable level of accountability. In the words of one college project manager:

> *The provision is now on a firm and unambiguous basis and has now achieved strategic status and is a key factor in the institution's planning and funding deliberations.*

Project colleges implemented a range of approaches to learning support with a myriad of formal and informal links in order to organise the full range effectively (see Figure 2 on the next page).

Different approaches to learning support

Appropriate staffing and timetabling are raised as important considerations, often requiring specialist support staff to operate extremely flexibly. Staff skills are recognised as crucial to student take-up of support both in marketing and delivering support which maximises both their own and the student's potential. One college indicates that the learning support tutor has a very wide brief and comments: 'These roles require a multi-skilled tutor who can work flexibly to satisfy students needs.'

The importance of information flow and good links are also identified in the effectiveness of the support for the student. Having systems in place to identify the range of needs accurately, to track progress, to provide feedback and to review progress during the year are also regarded as vital ingredients.

There was some variation in the extent to which colleges were able to co-ordinate the involvement of a wide range of staff with different kinds of specialist skills. In some colleges we saw separate organisation of basic skills, study and learning management skills, key skills and support for those with specific difficulties or disabilities, while in others support teams embraced staff from all relevant areas of the college. Separation often reflects historical development and most strategies advocate co-ordination. Major restructuring in two of the project colleges resulted in some benefits to learning support areas in each. In one, previously discrete areas of learning support and basic skills have been combined under one

Figure 2:

Cross-college curriculum facilities			Support provided in programme				
	Initial guidance & assessment	**Learning centres**	**Specialist workshops**	**Tutorial/active guidance**	**Partnership teaching**	**Differentiation in teaching**	**Special in-class support (L.S. or voc. tutor)**
GLOSCAT	✓	Use by F/T GCSE *		GNVQ Int Health & Soc care L.S. in parallel *	Team teaching – GNVQ Bus & Built environment	✓	✓
Huddersfield	✓	Use by GNVQ, Fnd. & GCSE/AL			Vocational & core skills staff – GNVQ *	✓	
Hull	Work of Learner Support Team *		✓	✓	✓	Learner Support work	Team in programme *
Lewisham	Integrated induction & Integrated & diagnostic assess – assessment work *	Drop in provision	✓	GNVQ Health & Soc Care (Found/Int & Adv) L.S. in parallel	Integrated course support (maths & lang) NVQ 2 Engineering, BTEC IT *	C&G 224 Electronics	Support by voc. tutor GNVQ Hospitality & Catering (Adv) *
Llandrillo	✓	Open access workshop for A-level *	Use of language support base *			Core skills for selected voc. areas – GNVQ *	GNVQ Core skills Specialist & voc support
Loughborough	✓	✓ & developing multimedia facilities	✓	Learning Manage – Time – cross – college GNVQ *	Learning Manage – assessment time & Additional Support – GNVQ Int. Business *	✓	Specialist language & numeracy support tutors
Nottingham People's	✓	✓	Take-up in basic skills workshop *	Use of parallel timetabling	Comms & language support – GNVQ 2 Motor Veh Found *	Training course tutors in Basic Skills in FE *	
Rotherham	✓	Use by voc. specialist to provide small group support – Business *	Small group sessions linked to programme areas	Use of parallel timetabling	Support tutor linked to programme team – Bus & Creative Arts *	✓	✓

NB Most college programmes include tutorial guidance work but some colleges in the study include this as part of their Learning Support Strategy, while others regard this as complementary but outside the remit of Learning Support teams.

*** Those approaches which were a particular focus for study in individual colleges**

Example 1: An example of a whole college policy

Learning support policy

This policy recognises the entitlement of all its students to assessed and planned learning support, identifies the commitment and planning which that involves and those responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.

Policy statement

This college is committed to learning support assessment and provision which is designed to enable every student to make maximum effective use of the education and training it provides.

Responsibility for implementation

- All staff have a responsibility to accept a professional commitment to the successful implementation of the policy.
- The College Management Team and the Corporation through the Policy Committee has a responsibility to review and update the policy and assure implementation.
- The Academic Board, through the offices of the Curriculum Committee and its working groups has responsibility to advise the College Management Team on issues of operational implementation.

Strategy

To achieve this we will:

- establish a clear and promoted entitlement to learning support assessment for all students at all entry points
- provide a range of services which reflect the support needs of all our learners and are evaluated by the learners
- ensure that learner support is fully integrated into all forms of curriculum delivery.

Operational outcomes

This involves a commitment which ensures:

- an effective system for the early identification of learner support needs which is managed by the tutor, the learner and specialist support
- an identified team of highly qualified and experienced staff to provide specialist assessment, support and training where necessary
- an approach to resource-based learning which acknowledges learner support as an integral part of curriculum delivery
- learner support which is owned by course teams and included in all curriculum planning and design.

Example 2: Responsibilities of learning support staff

(College A) Learning support team responsibilities

- Advise and provide specialist assessment for FEFC additional support claims
- Provide specialist support and advice to course teams on development of learning strategies and action plan to include students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Advise on the development and implementation of college policy in all areas of Learning Support
- Plan and deliver a college-based staff development programme as designed to reach and maintain standards required for an inclusive approach to additional support needs
- Liaise with College MIS on issues of student tracking and monitoring of activity
- Initiate and co-ordinate the college four-yearly internal audit on individual learner support
- Produce student information packs and entitlements in consultation with Quality Assurance and Client Services which sets, communicates and evaluates college standards for individual Learner Support
- Devise a course team entitlement for all learner support services
- Liaise with examinations section on special arrangements

Example 3: Job description

(College B) Learning tutor responsibilities

- Delivering a personal and career development programme
- Operating the managed learning process, including initial action planning and progress reviews at least twice-termly
- Meeting students regularly on a one-to-one basis
- Ensuring that students fully understand assessment procedures
- Monitoring and tracking the learning of all students across all units within his/her 'caseload'
- Maintaining student summative records to record and track progress, including the maintenance of grading evidence records
- Identifying problems with progress and creating action plans to enable students to solve problems
- Supporting students in the above
- Liaising with unit tutors with regard to student progress in individual units
- Communicating outcomes of monitoring and tracking of students to the Course Manager
- Liaising with learning support/language support/Key Skills teams with regard to individual students' progress
- Ensuring that Key Skills Units are fully addressed

manager; in the other, a key senior manager with overall responsibility for learning support services has been identified, where previously learner centre work and basic skills workshops have operated discretely.

Changing the college culture

Changing the college culture has emerged as a theme in each of the college strategies. It concerns a shift from deficit to entitlement and more independence for the learner but also includes some specific aspects of responsibility for the learning process.

Key questions

- Who is entitled to support?
- Who carries the balance of responsibility for ensuring that students who need or want support will receive it?
- Who decides the level, method and content of support?
- Who delivers the support?
- Do all tutors need to become multi-skilled, i.e. to be able to use learning support strategies?
- Who takes responsibility for assessment, referral and recording?

These questions and their answers signal a move from a model of learning support as the responsibility of a group of specialist staff, to a model of appropriate strategies embedded in the programme delivery. Most of the colleges comment on the struggle for specialist staff to gain acceptance and professional regard and respect from some programme areas. One college records perceptions from staff training in learning support and partnership teaching strategies, as: 'a challenge, opening practice to scrutiny by another tutor, challenging traditional teaching cultures.' Staff development, a key issue for whole institutional development, is identified as essential in any strategy for change and development in learning support.

Monitoring the effectiveness of support and demonstrating its value is also identified as an important part of this cultural shift, as well as the wider need to show value for money and to assure and improve quality.

Internal marketing and establishing responsibility for support at programme level are key issues in college development strategy. One college records disappointing results from a staff survey (the survey is reproduced in Appendix 1):

> *Nearly half the respondents claimed not to know the referral procedures (for learning support) despite significant efforts to circulate and display publicity materials on these and a number of learning support staff attending meetings and induction sessions.*

Another college stresses that a student-centred approach to learning, that is, starting from where the student is, is also a good approach to apply to working with other staff in the context of their strategy for learning support.

Three colleges specifically identified the importance of both formal and informal links at more than one level across the college, for example, learning support manager with faculty, school or programme area heads; and learning support tutors with course tutors. In some cases these had been built into organisational structures and meetings. Links which facilitated joint planning and implementation of support by specialist and mainstream staff working in partnership were seen to be particularly effective in promoting the take-up and effectiveness of support.

The pace of development, often slower than anticipated, was reviewed by several colleges when interim reports led to a revision of initial targets. One college invited programme managers to review their programme structure and the demands made on learners, alongside the teaching approaches used, with a view to identifying where support needed to be integrated into the programme. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2 and it is interesting to see that questions about teaching precede those about learning. Clearly, cultural change is slow to take effect, particularly relating to the realities of a shift in emphasis away from teaching and on to learning.

However, positive progress is being made. Several of the colleges, who have been establishing this work over two to three years, are beginning to identify a positive transition and valuable results. However, all still identify a need for considerable refinement and development. Since the change involves learning practices across a whole college, there is a need for integration with other initiatives, and the responsiveness has inevitably been slow in the first phases. One college reports:

> *Such culture changes take time . . . As in any new development, more time is needed at first. As the system becomes more embedded, liaison time can be decreased.*

Management, strategy and culture

All colleges stress a strategy involving a diversity of approaches.

> *The aim has been to make learning support as responsive as possible to the needs of individual students and the differing courses and client groups that make up mainstream provision.*

For most of the colleges such a variety of approaches, however, flourishes within a coherent overall structure, a common framework which allows room for diversity and a degree of autonomy.

> *It was considered important to allow flexibility in development in order that learner support could become embedded into college systems, allowing a sense of ownership of support issues for both tutor and student.*

Another college emphasises that the organisation of learning support should recognise and mirror other patterns in the institution. It sees it as an important function of senior management, in supporting development, to clarify and disseminate key objectives (for example, through policy or simple statements), but to allow teams to develop and evaluate effective approaches within an overarching framework.

The achievement of trust between members of the group or organisation and the commitment to a shared set of values relating to collaborative approaches is necessary for an effective whole college approach to an entitlement model of support. Most of the project colleges benefit from clear objectives and transparent but flexible systems for managing learning support. Diversity can flourish and be owned at the level of delivery and individual endeavours can be valued. Organisational strategy, structure and culture are all key to the eventual outcomes. An earlier Coombe Lodge Report, *Changing the Culture of a College* suggests:

> *Success appears to depend on some individual qualities, and on addressing the complexity of the practical realities of widely differing circumstances.*
>
> *(Coombe Lodge Vol 24 No 3 1994)*

This was written in the context of overall college management but the message could be communicated with some purpose in relation to the strategy and organisation of learning support.

Key issues

- Successful learning support involves a responsive and flexible approach, where specialist support staff decide on the most appropriate models of support with programme teams and students.
- Learning support is more likely to achieve success where the college culture has moved towards an appreciation of educational entitlement and inclusiveness for all learners and away from past models of withdrawal for remedial help.
- The most effective cross-college specialist support teams are drawn from all areas of the college which can contribute relevant experience.
- Learning support which is integrated into the programme but specific in addressing identified needs will be more likely to be taken up and valued by learners.

5 Models of learning support

Students receiving support across project colleges cover a wide range of curriculum areas and levels. They include NVQ and GNVQ at levels from foundation to advanced; City and Guilds, GCSE and A-level; creative arts, business, computing, built environment, engineering, electronics, motor vehicle, health and social care, hospitality and catering. Project colleges offer support for a wide range of students, including those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. The characteristic factor is the diversity of models offered within each college strategy for learning support.

Colleges rely on good formal and informal links between learning support and programme staff, in order to establish and deliver an appropriate model for the students and programme area. Consideration given to the particular needs of programme areas and groups of students has been a major influence in the models that have evolved. It has involved questioning which kinds of support a student is most likely to participate in, and benefit from. These forms of support include:

- support which is integrated into the programme area
- individual or group sessions related to the programme area but located in a base room
- separate/specialist area or discrete provision delivered by specialist staff in workshops or centres on either a class, surgery or drop-in basis.

In some cases a mix of all these possible approaches has been made available to students.

Programme staff can give credibility and status to learning support. Where there are opportunities for them to plan and work together with specialist colleagues to consider evidence of student needs, and discuss appropriate strategies for helping learners cope with those programme demands which have caused difficulties, they will be more likely to actively encourage students to take up support. However, some colleges identified resource difficulties in planning, organising and monitoring the range of models they would want to adopt. Liaison is time consuming but is necessary if essential information is to be shared for the mutual benefit of the learners and the institution.

Although there was no formal cost-benefit study undertaken there is clear evidence in reports produced for FEDA by project colleges that an integrated approach to support, promoted by tutors, is effective in retaining students. *Performance Indicators 1995–96 further education colleges in England* presents an analysis of data on student retention and achievement in sector colleges and shows continuation rates in the median college at 86% with continuation at only 83% in the 25th percentile (FEFC, 1997). The opportunity to retain up to 14% of the student population must be worth further investment in support for effective learning.

Initial assessment to identify learning support needs

Most project colleges screened full-time students as part of their entry process. Some extended this to part-time students. This helped to identify students who would need support with basic skills but the screening did not help colleges specify the exact nature of student needs, nor inform the detail of the support programme needed. In an attempt to make more detailed assessment of students some colleges developed their own programme-specific initial assessment materials which were administered through the induction process. Some colleges also used transitional statements from schools and other agencies for entrants with learning difficulties or disabilities. Access to specialist psychological assessments was also organised when required.

One college used screening prior to admissions interviews and some programme areas used the information from this in conjunction with interview information to guide course placements. In another college, models of support have been planned jointly with specific programme areas which have been targeted as a result of prior screening information and other college data.

Aggregate data from initial screening processes presented different level profiles for student populations entering different colleges across the project cohort. Both aggregate data and information on individual students were recorded and used in a variety of ways and for a range of purposes in different colleges. In some colleges screening information was used to inform strategic planning and was readily available

to all programme areas to support curriculum planning at operational level. In other colleges less than half of programme staff surveyed were aware of screening information or subsequent referral systems.

The data available from five colleges showed that between 20% and 75% of those students screened were found to be at a basic skills level below BSA Level 1. Commonly, less than a fifth of those identified actually experienced learning support, significantly less in some colleges. There is an issue for some students about support which is delivered outside the mainstream programme. It can be perceived negatively so that students resist taking it up. The challenge is clear: to find cost-effective ways of meeting support needs identified through initial assessment processes via models and approaches which have credibility with staff and are recognised and valued by students. It is equally clear that this challenge cannot be met by discrete and specialised provision alone .

Those colleges which undertook more specific initial assessment in the induction phase, did so either by referral to a learning support specialist, or through tutorial and learning management time or key skills work. Study support needs, other than basic skills, were also identified through guidance and assessments in the early part of programmes. Self-referral was encouraged in a few colleges, particularly where students were on higher level courses. (See Appendix 3 for an example of a self-assessment checklist for study skills.)

Learning agreements and individual action plans were widely used, after initial assessment, to help students manage their learning, aided by learning

Example 4: An extract from student guidance on learning support

Your entitlement

What the college will give you

1 You are entitled to confidential tutorials in relation to your personal welfare during your time at college.
2 You are entitled to an initial action plan drawn up between you and your learning tutor during the induction period (first one/two weeks of your programme). The plan will identify what you need to do – your learning targets for the duration of the programme. It will be based on a review of your achievements so far and your future intentions. It will cover everything you hope to achieve in your college course, including qualifications, additional studies and activities, and the development of various forms of general skills, knowledge and understanding.
3 You are entitled to receive information and advice from each of your subject/unit tutors, in advance of each planning and review session, on what you will be learning in their part of the programme, so that you are able to formulate short-term learning targets in your progress and review action plan tutorial.
4 You are entitled to two planning and review sessions every 12 weeks, to a maximum of half an hour each.
5 You are entitled to planning and review sessions which are properly conducted in that the Learning Tutor is helpful and sympathetic and takes steps to deal with problems which require college action, such as inadequate facilities or difficulties with tutors.

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from your Learning Tutor or the college, you can register your dissatisfaction with your Deputy Faculty Head for Student Services, or the Head of Student Services. Either arrange an appointment to see the Manager responsible or put your complaint in writing. You are entitled to a written response within 10 days. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you should take up your complaint with the Director for Internal Operations and Planning.

Your responsibilities

1 You are responsible for obtaining from your tutors the information needed for setting targets in the progress review and action planning tutorial.
2 You are responsible for attending the progress review and action planning tutorial at the time, date and place arranged, and providing the necessary information about learning targets.
3 You are responsible for attempting to meet the targets agreed and providing information on the progress you have made.

support. Continuing liaison between learning support and programme staff, in most colleges, ensured progress, through the development of an appropriate curriculum and the continuing and careful monitoring of support, student attendance and progress. Example 4 sets out a specimen of the student's entitlement to individual reviews to plan and support progress. Critical to the success of this particular review process is the availability of up-to-date information and advice from all staff who teach/support the student.

Further information, criteria for good practice and guidance on initial assessment can be found in FEDA's report, *Using initial assessment to identify learners' needs* (Green, 1997).

Learning centres

Seven of the eight colleges in the study offered drop-in and programmed learning through learning centres. Most of the college learning centres offer pleasant, recently adapted facilities with study consoles, computer workstations and banks of reference materials. Most have been located centrally in the college near library and study rooms; and a few are developing smart card entry to record usage. Staff in learning centres need to be prepared to work flexibly in response to a wide range of support needs requested by students using the facilities on a drop-in basis. They need to know when to refer students on to colleagues with specific skills or experience and they need to know who these people are. The image a learning centre has with the student population of the college is critical in promoting its use. One college regularly timetabled GNVQ students into the learning centre for key skills work, with support offered by a team of vocational and key skills specialists. Other students, working toward GNVQ, GCSE or A-level were offered individual support through a 'surgery' appointment system while whole groups were in session. The centre was a hub of activity, with the kind of buzz which attracted students to use it on a drop in basis so that key skills specialists timetabled in to the centre to team-teach intermediate GNVQ students could build in a Maths surgery session with a GCSE student, be available to offer support with a drop-in student's A-level Chemistry assignment, and anything else which arose. Another college set out to change the image of its learning centre by advertising high level Maths support for A-level students, and promoting the centre as an essential place to visit for those seeking higher grades.

Specialist workshops

Specialist workshops varied and had, in several cases, developed with more limited, paper-based resources. More recently these had been extended to include computer assisted learning programmes and other facilities. Staff in specialist workshops tended to be basic skills or key skills specialists. Workshops were most effective where specialist staff were kept well informed of support needs and assignments in advance of support sessions. Liaison between specialists and programme area staff enabled support to be directly relevant to programmes which motivated students more to attend sessions and benefit from support as well as ensuring more programme staff promoted support services.

In some cases, specialist equipment for students with visual, auditory and motor impairments was also based in, or adjacent to, workshops or learning centres. Facilities and services included brailling, computer adaptations, note-takers, communicators, signing and voice-activated dictaphones.

In three colleges, literacy and numeracy support or basic skills workshops operated separately from a more generalist learner centre, which was used by a much wider range of learners for flexible study. In several other colleges, work was either integrated into one centre, or small base rooms adjoined the main learner centre to provide for one to one or more specialist support. In the colleges with two or more sites, arrangements varied and development had generally begun from facilities established on one main site.

For a few colleges, development of learning support began with basic skills support and specialist workshop areas while the development of a learner centre was initially identified as supporting a broader range of study skills. Whether integrated or separately developed, most colleges now regard their specialist workshops and learning centres as important resources and team bases which contribute to and support work delivered within the programmes.

The value of a coherent central support system which integrates and maximises the potential of specialist staff, facilities and resources across workshops and learning centres, along with libraries, is widely recognised. One college's final report states:

> *We want a holistic approach to support rather than a structurally divided one, where things like Maths, communications and disability support are offered separately. Maths teachers need to be aware of language issues,*

communications teachers need to be aware of the impact of sensory impairment on reading . . . by taking on a multiplicity of roles and rarely saying no to any request for help we have managed to get study support and the issues it represents to be seen as an integral part of college planning.

Learning support through tutorials and active guidance

Several colleges offered learning support work which was arranged alongside tutorial time, or was integrated with it. This allowed the learning support tutor to work with some students, while the tutor for the group could support and monitor other learners in the group. For some students the support tutor worked in the same room as the tutorial staff; in other examples, specific support work took place in a separate room. This depended on students' needs and practical constraints.

In one college learning support work was fully integrated into a range of programmes through extension and enhancement of the role of the programme tutor. This was described as the 'learning management model'. In this particular model, GNVQ tutors were allocated up to seven hours each week with their tutor group, as 'learning management' time. There was a commensurate reduction in the taught hours available to 'deliver' mandatory and optional units. The focus of activities was personal development planning with practical support to enable students to develop skills essential to them in managing their own learning. Learning management time included:

- personal tutorial support
- individual review time to plan, track and record achievement
- key skills support
- individual and small group support with set assignments
- learning support for those with identified needs.

There was an element of team teaching within the model, with specialist staff working with the tutor from time to time.

Where students were referred for specialist support outside the programme area, it was given, where possible, by the same member of staff offering integrated key skills support within learning management time. Having built up trust and established a relationship within the programme area, students were keen to take up support outside the programme area, seeing it as an extension of their work within their mainstream curriculum. The previously perceived stigma attached to the learner centre seemed to disappear overnight. The strengths and weaknesses of the model are identified in Figure 3 below.

Partnership teaching

Seven of the eight colleges included partnership teaching in their approaches to learning support and five of the colleges provided studies in this area. Most colleges considered that partnership between learning support and a programme was essential to the effective delivery of support, even where two tutors were not teaching together in the same class.

Figure 3: strengths and weaknesses of the model identified by the college project manager

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good relationship between student and learning tutor • Improved achievement • Good retention of students • Good transferable skill development • Centrally designed cross-college model • Good links to additional support • Good identification of students' current needs	• Time resources • Need staff with appropriate broad skills • Improved grading evidence • Across GNVQs an inconsistency of interpretation of learning tutor role

Models varied considerably between colleges, mainly in the kind of liaison established to support the partnership. Some set up formal structures involving the learning support manager and programme leaders, others used support tutors linking with specific programme teams. In all cases the staff involved in teaching together expected to meet regularly. They targeted areas of support as they arose in the delivery of the programme and developed materials which integrated specialist support activities.

One college project manager recommends the use of *Effective use of reading* (Lunzer, 1979) and *Learning from the written word* (Lunzer, 1984) as invaluable aids to subject-based reading developments. The documents were used to inform collaborative planning of support delivered through partnership teaching.

The partnership approach was seen to facilitate the cross-fertilisation of skills and experiences between staff with different specialisms while giving a higher profile to support staff. Collaborative work has helped develop a shared understanding of fundamentals, like literacy skills, with a range of curriculum specialists. For example, science and engineering staff in one college who felt comfortable integrating elements of numeracy and IT support in the mainstream curriculum felt that literacy was a separate issue. However, reflection and discussion helped identify that some of their students experienced:

- a negative attitude to reading or limited ability to access different kinds of text which would inevitably impact on their progress
- difficulty in coping with subject-specific vocabulary
- a need to be helped to use the library and other resources to good effect
- problems in writing to essay-type formats when needed.

Partnership work informed the introduction of some literacy support work in context and led to a higher number of referrals from subject staff keen to obtain focused, short-term term support for their students. Where students took up discrete support provision alongside integrated support through partnership teaching it was easily possible for specialists to ensure activities were relevant and seen as a continuation of the mainstream curriculum but in a different learning environment.

An important outcome of partnership practice overall has been the improved recognition and value of support by subject staff which has encouraged a higher take-up of support through specialist workshops and centres.

Several colleges identified liaison as time-consuming but most pointed out that valuable staff development resulted from active partnership work. Good relationships and trust were important for staff coping with the challenge of opening their personal practice to scrutiny but the potential for improvement in quality was stressed. For some colleges, links over partnership work formed one part of a broader strategy of cross-college links between programmes and support tutors.

Having colleagues present while teaching is likely to become a more frequent occurrence with the move to self-assessment for the FEFC's new inspection regime. Where colleges are looking at team approaches and coaching and mentoring, there is a strong message emerging from FEDA's work in this area, that teams would do well to include a learning support specialist. (Example 5 shows extracts from one college's report on preparing support materials in partnership.)

Differentiation in teaching

As colleges fight to increase or sustain student numbers within existing, or sometimes diminishing, resources, class size becomes a real issue. Efficiency savings have already led to significant reductions in both staffing and taught hours across sector colleges so that increasing class sizes becomes one of the few remaining options left to managers struggling to balance budgets. Added to this is the knowledge that larger classes will be more than likely to represent greater diversity in age, experience and ability and initial assessment processes have revealed the extent to which this is the case in project colleges.

At a time when Government thinking about mixed ability teaching in schools is linked to concerns about low levels of achievement, FE colleges find themselves forced into a situation where larger and more divergent groups of learners are increasingly likely to become the norm. Differentiation, frequently the subject of concern and criticism in school inspection reports, will inevitably challenge colleagues in sector colleges.

Differentiation in teaching was the focus of brief studies by two project colleges, one in the context of delivery of GNVQ key skills and the other focusing on staff training towards appropriate teaching and

Example 5: Extracts from one college's report on preparing support materials in partnership

Materials

Materials were written to cover most areas of the vehicle systems and health and safety syllabus. Initially materials were produced in the form of packs covering a complete topic. Later, a simpler format was adopted, with a single sheet (no more than two) covering specific elements of a topic area. These were found to be more manageable and consequently more motivating for most of the students.

Our aim had been to devise accessible, differentiated, communicative materials. In practice, our emphasis became accessibility, and devising a set of core materials which could be stored on disc and modified and improved next year. Of course, materials were interactive and communicative, involving comprehension exercises, information transfer exercises (e.g. using texts to label diagrams or complete charts) and some writing opportunities, but much more work needs doing here. Apart from looking into more differentiated material, we need to look into linking materials in with the library and LDC facility and with IT, and with learning tasks involving students in their own research using facilities in and out of the college.

Our materials certainly need to be reviewed and evaluated by others, but a very encouraging start has been made, on which we are keen to build.

Development

We are all committed to continuing this work in the new academic year.

I) Target 1

- To produce a set of accessible foundation materials which provide underpinning knowledge of MV theory
- To produce extension materials
- To develop links with IT
- To provide opportunities for student research using facilities in and out of college

For this we need to:

- evaluate our existing materials – rewriting/amending as necessary
- put more emphasis on lesson planning and delivery – particularly in relation to group work/activities – to improve our own class and learning management
- consider the OCN communications syllabus (which we helped write) to frame a balance of communications skills development on course.

II) Target 2

To encourage students to access additional learning facilities, particularly in relation to numeracy and literacy. Here it is worth stressing that a communications person 'on course' can act as a vital, personal link between main course provision and additional support and is fundamentally important given the 'learning baggage' many foundation level students carry.

III) Target 3

Disseminate this experience to colleagues.

learning strategies. All colleges in the study identified the growing need for both learning support staff and programme tutors to become skilled in working with divergent learning needs and to recognise that greater differentiation through tasks, resources and support for learners would lead to positive outcomes.

Differentiation is about ensuring the best match or fit between the learner's needs and approach to learning and all that is offered through the learning environment. Differentiation in mainstream practice could benefit from improved liaison with specialist support staff who have much valuable experience to offer in designing learning tasks, resources and support activities appropriate for learners representing a range of levels and curriculum contexts. Effective differentiation is at the heart of the inclusive learning agenda.

The publication of *Inclusive learning* (Tomlinson, 1996) has had a major impact on colleges nationally. The FEFC's committee focused particularly on learners with difficulties and disabilities but there is general agreement across the sector that their report has wide-reaching implications for teaching and learning at whole institutional level. Certainly the committee's thinking about the meaning of inclusive learning is particularly pertinent to this section of FEDA's report:

> *Inclusive learning is a way of thinking about further education that uses a revitalised understanding of learning and the learner's requirements as its starting point. What the teacher does, what the college does, and what the sector does should be informed and shaped by this understanding. The aim is not for students simply to 'take part' in further education but to be actively included and fully engaged in their learning. At the heart of our thinking lies the idea of 'match' or 'fit' between how the learner learns best, what they need and want to learn, and what is required from the sector, a college and teachers for successful learning to take place. By 'inclusive learning' therefore, we mean the greatest degree of match or fit between the individual learner's requirements and the provision that is made for them.*
>
> *(Inclusive Learning, Tomlinson, 1996, pp 25–26)*

Specialist in-class support

Specialist staff, such as language support staff, sometimes offer timetabled sessions, at other times specialist support is offered in class. Specialist in-class support will often be focused on skills development. The extent to which specialist staff collaborated with mainstream staff was more varied in this model than in partnership teaching where joint needs' identification and planning were essential strands of development. Tasks and activities could suffer a lack of vocational contextualisation so that students perceived the support to be irrelevant/unrelated to the vocational context. This kind of support could be at risk of being stigmatised by students.

Double-staffing and 'piggy-backing' were also used to describe models where a specialist provided support to identified students during a timetabled programme session. The specialist support tutor generally provided feedback on students' progress, and this also led, in some cases, to a degree of negotiation over the curriculum and methodology which would help students achieve assignments more effectively. This inevitably relied for success on good interpersonal and negotiation skills, as described in partnership models. A few colleges commented that support tutors were inevitably drawn to help a wider range of students if they were available in the class. Again the emphasis was on good liaison at programme and class level.

Ever-changing models

All colleges identified the need to use models flexibly. They recognised that programme staff and student cohorts shifted from year to year (as did learning support teams) and therefore, it was important to use evaluative information to improve and develop models each year. Several colleges stressed that improved models should nevertheless be built within the context of a clear and coherent framework. Advice from one college report suggests:

- the focus has to be on enabling learners
- identify, develop and work with all specialists on how a devolved model, which is non-threatening and concentrates expertise where it is most effective, can be achieved
- involve and empower teams, allow teams to decide on the preferred approach for learners in their areas.

Key issues

- The outcomes of initial assessment should be used at both strategic and operational level for the benefit of the whole institution and the individual learner.
- A high volume of support needs cannot be met through discrete and specialised support provision alone but require models which integrate support within the programme.
- A flexible approach to the staffing and use of multimedia learning centres, which promote a positive image of higher achievement, will serve learners well.
- Good liaison between specialist and mainstream staff encourages learners to make more effective use of specialist workshops for focused support.
- Partnership teaching enables specialist and mainstream staff to work collaboratively to target tasks, materials and support to the needs of individuals within the programme area.
- Extended and enhanced tutorial provision delivered by multi-skilled tutors can offer students effective support for the management of their own learning.
- Larger and more diverse groups of learners will demand greater differentiation through mainstream teaching and learning practice. Specialist staff can play a role in supporting mainstream colleagues in ensuring the best match or fit between the learners' needs and approaches to learning and the learning environment.
- The most effective provision has a wide range of strategies for providing support and the flexibility to match them to need.

6 Funding learning support

Learning support and the FEFC funding mechanism

A significant proportion of the work that has been described in earlier sections of this report can attract funding through the FEFC mechanism of additional support bands, but by no means all. The mechanism in Wales still relies on a bi-annual bidding process, although a move towards a criteria-based system, similar to that used in England, is anticipated. At present this means that a Welsh college is not assured of gaining funding against Additional Learning Support (ALS) expenditure.

The impact of the funding mechanism on colleges which aim to improve retention and achievement through appropriate support has been significant. The criteria and bands for funding additional support are well documented and updated annually in FEFC guidelines. However, college interpretations of the criteria vary and have been the focus for questions and debate with experts from the FEFC at a number of FEDA's national conferences held to disseminate the findings from research and development work in this area.

A definitive model has not been agreed, so that additional support funding remains a source of continuing discussion and consultation with the FEFC. Recent development work supported through colleges which are members of the Urban Colleges' Network has made a small scale comparative study of costs set against additional funding units by different colleges. The findings from this project are reported in FEDA's publication *Additional support, retention and guidance in urban colleges.*

The learning support project colleges reported difficulties with the level at which Band 1 is set. They identify a number of students each year who receive small amounts of additional support (perhaps four to six hours each term), sometimes through drop-in services, to which they return irregularly when they need help through a specific learning barrier. Other students attend sessions for 10 to 12 weeks and do not need further support. Without this help, these students would not succeed. They need support but the cost of support does not reach the minimum level for additional support units.

Some colleges resource their learning support service mainly on estimated ALS income, and problems arising have equally unacceptable solutions: either to indicate to the student that s/he needs to attend more often than is really necessary; or to send the student away because of a lack of resources. In practice one or two extra learners are not an issue, but when many fall into this category, they represent an unfunded learning problem. One college estimates that 67% of those who take up learning support in the learning centre are not funded through additional support units as the total support time falls below the level set by FEFC funding bands.

Another problem is that additional support units relate to the college's average level of funding. This means that a college with a low Average Level of Funding (ALF) will receive less than their costs through the banding system, whereas a high ALF college will receive more. Clearly the move through to convergence will resolve this problem but at the moment it is a real issue for low ALF colleges.

There remains the fundamental issue of funding individual learners' additional needs only when they require sufficient help to qualify for additional support units which presses learning support back towards a deficit model. If learning support is to be the entitlement of all learners, especially in circumstances where the needs identified may inhibit progress and prevent students from achieving their qualification goals, colleges will need to be able to provide it. A number of colleges continue to express concern at significant exclusions, for example, for basic information technology skills.

Helena Kennedy's report from the Widening Participation Committee will be much welcomed by colleges. In devoting a chapter to funding issues, 'Funding is the most important lever for change', the report communicates strong messages:

> *We fear that the continuing year-on-year reductions in unit costs across publicly funded further education are providing a disincentive for providers to invest in the additional support known to be required for success with some learner groups . . . Resources are required for both new students and for the additional support, guidance and enrichment that under-represented groups need if more are to*

participate successfully in education and training. Investment is required in curriculum, institutional and technological change.

(Kennedy, 1997)

College funding for learning support

Most of the project colleges funded learning support work on assumptions derived from college unit costs (in other words that a certain number of additional units can be generated) or from attributing unit costs to programme areas on the basis of student unit generation, which is then top-sliced for learning support. In most colleges the learning support manager or co-ordinator controls resources for allocation on staffing and materials. In a few colleges learning support teams participate in the annual process of planning and estimating the units for the FEFC funding bid and in parts of the budget planning process.

A part of the monies allocated was generally converted into delivery hours based on average staff costs. Most colleges in the study identify average teaching staff costs of between £30–£35 per hour for learning support work. Most commonly a ratio of 1:4 (Staff Student Ratio) was used, although some colleges identified a pattern for learning support work where 1:1 sessions for specific areas were included, as well as assessment costing generally between £15–£19 an hour (see Example 6 on the following page).

Tariffs identified by some colleges to assist tutors in estimating and monitoring budgets also include costs for specialist assessments, for example, educational psychologists. Once budgets and potential demand have been established, a few colleges then divide the resources broadly into discrete areas for support, such as, number and language, in order to plan initial timetables in conjunction with programmes.

Several colleges stressed that expenditure tends to be front-loaded, putting in more support work during induction and the early phases of the course. However, students can experience problems, or identify needs at different stages in a learning programme. Colleges which have monitored the student drop out rate often report a large percentage loss of students after a whole term has been completed. It is important that support systems can respond flexibly to needs as and when they are identified.

Some project colleges identified a high demand for support prior to course assessment work and to prepare for end examinations. The need to fit in with programme times and the 'bulges' in demand requires flexibility in both the availability and delivery of support as well as expenditure patterns. Predicting and being responsive to need makes planning resources a difficult task.

Accommodation and materials

All but one college in the study offered the facilities of a learning centre which was used by students for timetabled learning support and drop-in support. All the colleges also offered specialist workshops, mostly for basic skills, including discrete areas or base rooms for language and numeracy support and for small group or one-to-one work. A few colleges also offered, or are developing, resource-based learning facilities in programme areas, to help alleviate the problems of geographical access otherwise presented in multi-site colleges.

Project colleges reported that most of the learning centre accommodation is thought to be attractive and conveniently located central to the college. It can be either integrated with, or near to, library facilities. Efforts have been made to promote an 'upmarket' image, with multi-skilled staff to support a range of taught and independent learning activities for those seeking excellence through high levels of achievement. There has been a conscious effort to move students away from perceptions of learning centres as 'remedial workshops' where users can be isolated from other students and have access to limited learning resources.

Most centres offer multimedia resources, some with access to the Internet and CD-ROMs and benefit from colourful displays. Most also have available a range of learning packs and study support materials, both subject-based and more general. A number offer adjacent tutorial rooms and some specialist workshop bases for literacy and numeracy. Most colleges provide some specially adapted equipment for those with visual, auditory and motor impairments. Language laboratory facilities and multimedia developments were also used in one college. Centres report that they are often very busy. FEDA's recent manual, *Learning Resource Centres*, presents detailed case studies of LRC provision in seven colleges (FEDA, 1997). These studies will be of interest to learning support specialists.

In some colleges learning materials used by support staff are located adjacent to learning centres and workshops, except where there are programme resource bases. A wealth of 'home grown' and published materials are available although most colleges indicate that there is a need to refine and develop

Example 6: Two examples of funding

College X

Student X: Part-time GCSE Human Biology

Pre-entry: Nothing

Entry:

Initial assessment by support tutor costed as 30 minutes of 1:1 tuition @ £33 per hour. Dyslexia assessment by educational psychologist bought in from LEA. Standard charge of £120 which comprises the LEA charge of £110 plus administrative costs in setting it up.

On programme:

Weekly attendance for support. Sometimes for two hours, sometimes for less, occasionally twice a week. Sometimes including up to 20 minutes individual tuition and sometimes she worked largely on her own. We do not attempt to log all the details but cost the support at two hours per week @ £33 per hour on a SSR of 1:4 i.e. £16.50 per week, starting from the first session a student attends until the tutor signals that the student has exited. X came regularly so she is recorded as having 26 weeks of support.

Assessment costs:

Exam concession secured of 25% extra time requiring extra invigilation and administrative costs. Averaged as 30 minutes from the Dyslexia coordinator @ £33 per hour and 2 hours admin and invigilation @ £10 per hour.

Total costs:

Initial assessment £16.50
Dyslexia assessment £120
On programme support 26 x £16.50 = £429
Assessment costs £16.50 + £20 = £36

Total: £ 601.50, Band 1 (Band 0 is also claimable for p/t students on programmes of less than 450 hours per year)

College Y

Components:

1:1 assessment and self-assessment interview

x hours for programme design or organising of support or specialist assessment

1:1 ~ 1:4 tutor support over x weeks

x hours of support assistant time

1:1 reviews for each 12 hours of support

As an example, individual additional support for a GNVQ intermediate student may be funded as follows:

Based on staff cost £35 per hour:

Initial screening as group Diagnostic + self-assessment 1:1	} approx 1.5hrs
Programme development Administration of support/ tracking Liaison with course staff/leader	} approx 5 hrs
Teaching 18 hrs planned on 1:3 6 hrs	
Review each 12 hrs/term dependent on whichever is shorter	2 hrs
Total:	14.5 hrs (£507.5 Band 1)

materials further, especially those related to vocational assignments. A few colleges also indicate that wider access to use of CD-ROM material could enhance basic skills support. In most colleges programme and learning support staff contribute to materials in the centres and specialist bases but the general experience was that one or two programme areas in each college tended to be more involved than others, often the result of interaction with members of the learning support team on particular support issues.

In a few colleges the boundaries between specialist basic skills workshops, students with learning difficulties and disabilities support and learning centres have resulted in different qualities of accommodation. Literacy, numeracy and bases for learners with difficulties and disabilities have not always experienced the benefits of recent adaptations and new furniture. Special project money has supplemented college funding to build up equipment and resources in learning support areas and to pump prime new developments. Sponsors have also been sought to buy equipment for disability support. Some colleges indicated an equipment and materials budget of £1,500 to £3,000 (in the region of £4–£5 per full-time student per year receiving learning support). Although drop-in, individual, and specialist group work with specific programmes is undertaken in the workshops and learning centres, an increasing level of learning support work is timetabled into the programmes and relies on the programme accommodation and resources, together with learning support materials and specialist staff who can/will travel.

Staffing

Aspects of organisation and management of learning support work have been discussed earlier in the report. Most colleges have a cross-college team of staff, consisting of a manager (or co-ordinator), teaching staff with specialist skills and support staff, whose roles vary from college to college. Co-ordination of the involvement of a wide range of staff, including Basic Skills, Key Skills, English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL), Dyslexia, English, Maths, IT, Librarians, Students with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (SLDD), can be challenging, but will increase the potential in learning support services and models.

Support staff have different backgrounds, specialisms, roles and responsibilities. In some cases support staff are largely administrative in others they support a range of activities including access to learning materials.

The colleges in the study vary considerably in size and correspondingly the number of core staff in the learning support team also varies, as do the number of part-time members. The latter include vocational tutors mainly based in programme areas, other language and Mathematics tutors based in programme teams and a number of part-time staff like those with responsibility for ESOL or dyslexia. Appendix 4 shows an example of one college's staffing chart for learning support for one academic year, which indicates not only the staff involved, but the complicated channels for communication and organisation because of the crossover of responsibilities. This is taken from an urban college with 3,500 full-time equivalent students, 18% of which are enrolled on full-time programmes. About half the student intake are mature students; 15% of students are of black or Asian origin.

Most colleges aim to keep a reasonably stable staff team. Inevitably there are changes annually, as work develops, programmes change their needs and new staff are drawn in. The diversity in the size and nature of the colleges and the different stages of development of their learner support work, produces a large difference in the volume of provision, with a small college offering 65 hours a week of learning support staff activity and a large college providing nearly 300 hours a week, over half through part-time tutors. Learning centres are typically staffed from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm daily and maybe for two or three evenings, with a few open for longer hours. A number of staff are usually present, especially in the larger centres.

The difficulty in ensuring good quality staffing and an appropriate range of skills for learning support work has been raised by several colleges. Determining a core of funding which can safely be translated into permanent services has been an issue for colleges in the development of learner support work. The difficulty with the system of additional support funding is that, implicit in it, is the potential for variation in the volume of needs identified from year to year.

A strong message emerging from earlier sections on models and approaches is the need to ensure at the least, good liaison, and at best, active partnership work with mainstream staff. Where all those with specialist skills have opportunities to work together as a team and there are systems and structures which

enable members of teams to partner mainstream staff, learning support will have the best chance of being a student entitlement which is real and effective.

Key issues

- Learning support as an entitlement for all learners is much wider in scope than the support claimed through additional support units. This needs to be reflected in the resource allocations for both generic and additional support.
- To maximise the potential in the FEFC funding mechanism for additional support units, colleges need to bring together the skills and experience of those who manage the curriculum, MIS and learning support.
- Involving a wide range of staff with different specialisms can enhance the range and effectiveness of learning support provision.
- Colleges need to find cost-effective ways of harnessing the experience and skills of staff to work collaboratively to increase the availability of quality, multimedia, programme specific, support materials.

7 Central systems for learning support

Information systems

Project colleges reported very different levels of access to, and support from, their management information systems. Most colleges used information logged centrally at an early stage on individual student records, to generate claimed ALS units but relied on learning support staff to log supplementary information and to track learning support activities. Data could be stored manually or on computerised records not yet connected to the management information system. Some colleges indicated that better links are planned in the next stage of development for the MIS within the college. Accessibility of information is criticised in three colleges, while internal use of e-mail systems in two other colleges assists the speedy transfer of information.

Several learning support teams had designed their own systems for monitoring and recording, and these included a log based on average support costs per student for different services. This approach was described as a 'meter running' approach so that from the point of initial assessment a student form with tariffs was generated and was added into ALS claim records once the relevant sums were triggered. The system meant that each student had a learning support story on record which allowed for tie up between initially identified needs, take-up of support and, later, progress and outcomes. Several colleges kept separate records for learning, attendance and costs. Keeping records as clear, accessible and simple as possible, is the message from most colleges. Records can then be shared between administrators and practitioners and used more widely for several purposes.

Information guides have been drawn up by several colleges confirming the level and kind of information to be collected and the ways in which it should be recorded. More detailed learning records can then be kept in student files and programme files which are accessible to students and tutors who work with them, along with action plans and progress assessments.

The heavy load of record-keeping identified by all colleges in the study is associated with a complex situation involving large numbers of staff collecting information for a range of purposes to meet both internal college requirements and the requirements of significant others outside the college. Information collected for the FEFC provides evidence of the demand for learning support and the volume and pattern of delivery. Where the information collected for the FEFC is accurate and is recorded in a form which makes it easily available to a range of staff it can be used to support internal processes which benefit the learner as well as informing continuous improvement of provision.

Information gathered on initial screening of students is generally communicated to programme teams. The amount of information recorded varies, but most colleges operate systems using fairly simple standard forms which log basic learning needs. The information can be kept by either the learning support tutor or the programme tutor, mostly both. One college identifies that assessment information is available for guidance and selection interviews and that:

> *Vocational areas have a profile of group and area needs as a result of data from initial assessment being keyed into the college information system.*

Information gained from initial assessment has informed curriculum development in some areas, such as offering pre-programme inductions or taster weeks.

Most colleges identify a particular member of the specialist support team to link with a programme area. This person has a major role in ensuring information flows. Where learning support is integrated into tutorial and guidance work, regular student/tutor reviews are used to monitor progress in meeting specific goals identified. Where learning support is delivered separately, progress records are kept, usually involving the student and feedback is given to relevant tutors. Planning and progress meetings with programme teams and regular meetings of learning support staff are included as positive channels for sharing information on students and practices.

One of the particular weaknesses identified in several colleges has been the failure to get information across to a range of staff on the activities and systems in operation for learning support work. This has also been identified in relation to external

agencies, local schools, and especially in relation to transition for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Training, systematic involvement in student and staff induction; providing student leaflets; simplifying pro-formas; and providing outline information in staff and curriculum handbooks are among a range of methods which have been adopted.

Four colleges stressed the importance of providing management reports on different aspects of strategy and delivery to disseminate and promote information on the service and to inform future planning and resourcing. For some colleges a lack of administrative support hampered information tracking and the compiling and classification of support materials. The appointment of someone to the role of learning advisor helped to bridge a gap by opening access to information for students, logging student attendance and progress records, and also liaising with teams.

Quality

Student and tutor evaluations of progress against identified needs and targets for improvement are key processes in assuring quality in learning support. Learning support teams have built up a wealth of information at the student and programme level, which is tracked and co-ordinated with other members of the learning support team and programme teams. The support team in one college produced its own criteria for success. These are reproduced in Example 7, along with the data sources and issues identified by the college which used them.

For most colleges learning support is included in quality assurance systems through course reviews and student perceptions surveys. For some it is evaluated as a cross-college service. It is at a wider college level that learning support teams consider it has been much harder to compile the necessary information to demonstrate effectiveness.

Few learning support teams considered that college-wide surveys were able to include sufficient information on learning support work to assure quality or identify detailed strengths and areas for improvement. Most had initiated their own student and staff evaluations through specially designed questionnaires. (See Appendix 5 for an Example of a College Devised Questionnaire to Evaluate Students' Perceptions of Aspects of Support Provision.)

Several learning support teams found the analysis of information they gathered about aspects of support provision extremely valuable in drawing their attention to issues they might not have considered otherwise.

The studies inyolved in this project have helped teams to focus on the information that will be valuable to compile, where it is available and how to gather and use it. It has been a positive step forward for most colleges to be able to demonstrate some of the value of learning support work. The evaluation of developments over one or two years and, in a few cases, testing of improvements, has already informed plans for a next stage. Some colleges who were able to design information and review systems which fit with centrally organised systems in the college had access to a range of data already available. This helped in comparing and analysing outcomes across different programme areas.

Using comparative data on course retention and achievement for students receiving learning support and those who do not, has helped one college to identify areas of possible under-achievement in learning support. This has resulted in an examination of the other factors affecting the students on the programme, to make a fair assessment of the effectiveness (or not) of the learning support. Several colleges point to the difficulty of evaluating learning support alone. It is open to all the variable factors that affect the learner. The line from information to quality is not straight! Learning support will not make good, for example, an inappropriate course placement, nor poor tutoring skills.

Staff development

Earlier sections of the report focused on shifts in organisational and learning cultures, implied by developments in learning support. Increasingly the strategies and models adopted by colleges depend on learning support staff working closely with programme area staff and very often, delivery within the programme. One college's findings informed the view that successful strategies for the development of all staff would mean that ultimately specialist learning support staff should not be necessary. The longer term picture consists of appropriate learning strategies, help for all learners in identifying and managing their own needs, and multi-skilled programme tutors, trained to deliver learning support. Some colleges target training for programme area staff to ensure that each curriculum area has increasing numbers of staff with the skills and confidence to deliver support.

Example 7: An example of success criteria, data sources and issues raised by one college keen to get a measure of its learning support provision

RETENTION SUCCESS WOULD BE INDICATED BY:

1 Students remaining on course and not dropping out.

Data sources

1 Compass
2 Manual records

Issues

1 Accuracy of records. Dependent on course tutor filling in register and notifying Compass when students leave.
2 Frequency of retention record print-outs?
3 Records would need to be passed to AST.
4 Would need to be analysed group by group, including AS and non-AS students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT WOULD BE INDICATED BY:

1 Improvement in assessment outcomes by AS students throughout course.
2 Qualification outcomes.

Data Sources

1 Tracking of success by assignment and unit.
2 Externally assessed unit outcomes data.
3 Qualification outcomes' data.

Issues

1 Need to be able to track results by assignment and unit for AS and non-AS students.
2 Comparisons would need to be made on a group-by-group basis.
3 Would need to investigate drop-in results per assignment and unit through use of exception reporting e.g. may be a problem with unit.
4 Recommend use of computerised tracking system developed by P Herbert. This would show pattern of achievement by assignment/unit; as well as initial assessment outcomes.
5 On courses selected for pilot staff would need to be trained to use computer tracking system.

POSITIVE PROGRESSION WOULD BE INDICATED BY:

1 Progression to another course at same level.
2 Progression to a higher level course.
3 Progression from GNVQ to NVQ.
4 Progression to work.
5 Positive student evaluation of course.

Data Sources

1 Destinations data.
2 Student evaluation of course.

Issues

1 How refined and reliable is destinations data?
2 How extensively is it available?
3 How many courses use a SPOC?
4 Comparisons would need to be made on a group-by-group basis.
5 How extensively could instruments be applied?
6 Sampling methodology?

Example 8: An extract from one college's submission for an accredited training programme

Level of accreditation sought

We are seeking to accredit this course at Level 3 within the University of X.

INSET Credit Accumulation Framework because the purpose of the course is:

- to develop specialist teaching skills in support of professional roles
- to re-orientate individuals to prepare them to undertake new roles.

Why design our own course?

There is no existing form of accreditation that will suit our particular needs. The nearest available course would be Integrating Language & Learning Development developed by the Language and Literacy Unit, Southwark College, and accredited by the University of Greenwich. We have held informal talks with the Language and Literacy Unit but it was finally decided that their course was not appropriate for our needs.

There were two reasons for this:

1 The course was only about Language Support and we wanted a course which covered both Language and Maths support.
2 The course is accredited at MA level which is too demanding in terms of time for hard-pressed colleagues.

We have therefore designed a training programme specifically for X College, details of which are given below.

Aims and learning outcomes

(a) To 're-orientate' experienced vocational lecturers so that they can deliver additional support.

(b) To enable course tutors to become active partners in the planning and delivery of additional support on their own course.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course participants will be able to:

(a) identify the language/maths requirements of vocational courses
(b) understand the generic maths, language and learning skills which students need to develop in order to succeed on these courses and to progress beyond them
(c) understand and contribute to the initial assessment of students on these courses
(d) plan, deliver and evaluate team taught sessions which facilitate the development of these skills
(e) access specialist help for the benefit of their students
(f) understand, implement and develop X College procedures for delivering additional support
(g) prepare, deliver and evaluate individual learning programmes which develop maths/language and learning skills.

Entry requirements and pre-requisites

This training course will be a pre-requisite for all new members of the Additional Support Team during 1995–96.

To be selected to join the additional support team lecturers will:

- have had successful experience of working with individuals and small groups
- demonstrate a real interest and enthusiasm to learn more about Maths/Language Support
- be willing to deliver Maths/Language Support in a team teaching context
- work under the guidance of the cross-college co-ordinators for Maths/Language Skills to develop course-related Maths/Language Skills as a member of specified course teams.

Indicative content

- X College additional support procedures
- Identifying the language/maths and learning requirements of vocational courses
- Identifying the language/maths and learning skills that students need to succeed on their courses
- Initial language/maths assessment
- Strategies for developing language/maths and learning skills within specific vocational contexts

Participants will be expected to acquire a general overview of the development of both Maths and Language skills. However, for assessment purposes, they will be able to concentrate on either Maths or Language.

Pattern of learning activities

Time scale

The course will start between June and October xxxx depending on when staffing arrangements for Additional Support have been finalised. The course will be completed by xxxxx.

Course delivery

The course will be delivered by a combination of:

- focused reading using the course *Resources Handbook*
- six three-hour group sessions on key issues
- individual mentoring (up to 3 hours per candidate)
- an ongoing learning diary with periodic evaluation.

Candidates will be encouraged to work co-operatively and share ideas over the college e-mail system.

All candidates for the award will be members of the Additional Support Team, managed on a daily basis by the two Additional Support Co-ordinators who are also key delivery people on the course. Candidates will also participate in the termly Additional Support Review Days.

Assessment

Assessment will include the following:

1 a class profile (for 95-96) – drawn up jointly with the Course Tutor – showing initial assessment of students' skills and other relevant information
2 an analysis of a course syllabus for identifying the maths, language and learning skills
3 plans and evaluation of three delivery sessions team taught by the candidate with a professional colleague showing strategies for the development of maths, language and learning skills
4 examples of three individual learning programmes across the range of students including evidence of negotiation, review and adaptation
5 records of work done with three students to go with (4).

Raising awareness in basic skills issues for all programme tutors forms a first stage for staff training in most colleges. Programmes include, using the City and Guilds 7324 Certificate for Vocational Tutors, with staff moving on to the Basic Skills in FE Certificate (C&G 9285) or the Initial Certificate in Basic Skills (C&G 9282/3). However, basic skills training covers only one aspect of learning support. These and a range of other accredited courses are criticised, variously, for providing only a limited introduction, being too narrow and non-specific as well as failing to address wider study support issues. Help is needed particularly with support activities and skills for learners on level 2 and 3 programmes. Specialist support teams do the best job possible within existing constraints and are most successful where resources support partnership practice. But overall, major staff development required for a whole institutional, entitlement model, make demands for a commitment that hard stretched specialist co-ordinators and their teams felt unable to give.

While accredited training clearly holds attraction and rewards for some staff, basic skills specialists do not want to go over familiar ground, learned through several years practice. For this reason several colleges are considering training courses developed with Open College Networks, which could include accredited modular programmes relating to specific aspects of learning support. One college designed its own course and put together a submission to a local higher education institution for accreditation within their credit framework at Level 3. (An extract from the submission is reproduced in Example 8).

The following list covers most of the accredited programmes used by project colleges:

- British Sign Language introductory, stage 1, 2 & 3
- City and Guilds 7324: Certificate for vocational tutors: basic skills support in FE
- City and Guilds 9282/3: Initial certificate in basic skills
- City and Guilds 9285: Certificate in basic skills in FE
- City and Guilds 7401: Certificate of management studies (co-ordinators)
- City and Guilds: Further & adult education teaching certificate
- Open College developed accredited programmes
- RSA Computer literacy/CLAIT
- RSA Counselling skills in the development of learning
- RSA Diploma in teaching specific learning difficulties
- RSA Diploma in teaching literacy and numeracy
- Training and Development Lead Body D32/3/4
- University of Greenwich specialist accredited programmes.

Many members of learning support teams had specialist qualifications for dealing with learning difficulties like dyslexia or in teaching ESOL and basic skills.

College recommendations included a progressive staff development programme that should contribute to accredited achievements and should include basic skills and IT teaching competences. Focused programme team development was generally identified as a more successful strategy than broader cross-college staff training days, which sometimes suffered poor attendance and conflicting commitments.

Where staff development in learning support had been given a high order of priority it had gained from being included in a wider staff development strategy. This had included an induction phase of awareness raising: basic guidance on systems described in policy and practice handbooks, briefings for all schools; programme areas or faculties relating to assessment; referrals and specialist support available and a developing culture of undertaking basic training in learning support issues. In one college this takes the shape of, 'an essential accreditation grid, which will require staff to undertake training in supporting learning . . . ' This forms part of a wider ladder or grid of training which will help the college to assess, encourage and develop the skills of staff over several years.

Several colleges have also considered ways in which they can involve staff in priority areas of training through similar staff training days to inset days in the school sector. The experiences of the colleges indicate that the higher the profile for formal training in learning support, the more effective the outcomes in terms of interest, attendance and progress. This effectively mirrors the delivery of learning support itself, where support from key staff in programme areas can make a significant difference to student take up, commitment and outcomes.

A significant level of staff development in learning support is delivered locally. It may emerge informally from networking, from unplanned inputs at meetings and from learning support and programme staff, working in partnership:

This allows staff to share skills, evaluate teaching styles and materials and learn from each other; it may help promote common understandings of the issues.

Colleges insist that the value of informal work should not be underestimated:

Important learning takes place, about the programme, the needs of vocational teaching about learning strategies and about the more specific needs and progress of individual students.

One college identifies the following range of strategies used for training and development:

- half-day workshops once or twice a year on areas such as: dyslexia, deaf awareness or disability awareness
- skills workshops during team development days: action planning, negotiating skills, active listening
- annual key skills conference
- briefing sessions at departmental meetings: mostly on ALS units, initial assessment
- programme team meetings: all partners now included in team meetings
- joint planning sessions and materials development.

This covers a range of activities also described by the other colleges who stress the need to, 'share examples of good practices' and to, 'provide strategies for overcoming difficulties', through discussions. Two colleges also refer to a specific mentoring role:

For new members of the learning support team and vocational colleagues, we are enhancing the input on strategies . . . The fact that all new participants have mentors means that development needs can be met in an ongoing way.

Learning advisors and support staff are also included in training and development strategies. In a few colleges they are playing a growing part in the assessment and organisation of learning support.

Colleges recognise that valuable communication and learning has taken place as a result of the range of staff development work and that this has helped to forge useful links for further development of learning support work. The studies from the colleges identify:

- considerable staff development work still to be undertaken
- the need to find more appropriate accredited programmes
- many learning support specialists need to understand the content of vocational programmes in order to develop and compile more subject-related materials.

The following evaluation, from one college based on its study in the area of staff training, illustrates some of the issues that are likely to be raised through the development of new learning strategies:

It has been interesting to observe a striking parallel between what staff see as the problems students face and what students themselves report . . . Staff report feeling compromised and frustrated working with students challenged by the literacy demands of their courses. Students also report frustration. This highlights a potential for staff to blame students and students to blame staff.

Key issues

- Simple, transparent systems are needed to track and record student attendance and progress for a range of purposes.
- Learning support provision needs to be embraced within a self-critical culture to continuously improve its quality and effectiveness.
- Learning support is a whole college issue which needs a whole college strategy for staff development.

8 Getting a measure of learning support

Learning support provision has grown markedly over recent years. Two colleges record 100% growth in provision with development still planned. There has been a significant shift in the nature of provision with an increasing proportion of support work being delivered through close co-operation with programme teams, and in some instances through integrated models which involve positive partnerships between specialist and mainstream staff. All colleges record that learning support is making a positive difference to:

- the student experience
- college and learning cultures
- student retention and achievement.

However, the extent of that difference is still, in some cases, hard to quantify.

A wide range of evidence was gathered as a basis for evaluation in this project. The main source was through the use of staff and student questionnaires. Some colleges have also included information collected from planning, review and course team meetings, and from monitoring student action plan targets and achievements. Other information has been compiled from college-wide perception surveys. Most colleges included information on the results of initial assessment and take-up of learning support. One college was able to provide statistical comparisons of the retention and achievement of students receiving learning support with that of other students on their programme and demonstrated positive outcomes. (One college's evidence of improved retention is shown in Figure 4 on page 28.)

Where the data is limited, evidence is less conclusive. In the case of the college where data is extensive, firmer conclusions can be reached on the positive effects of learning support on retention and achievement. This college intends to look at year-on-year statistics and will look more closely at student progress in terms of grades. Most of the project colleges intend to use statistical, as well as qualitative and case study evidence, more fully.

All the colleges identified a large number of variables affecting student outcomes which makes it difficult to attribute outcomes to individual factors. They noted variation in the quality and skills of individual tutors, variation in curriculum and in activities and materials planned for the programme. Among students a wide disparity in such factors as individual learning histories and social, economic and domestic circumstances prevailed. Nevertheless, from the wealth of material provided, it is possible to extract a number of conclusions.

Results of initial assessment

Most project colleges aimed to screen all or most learners at entry. From initial screening, the number of students identified as entering college with a basic skills level below BSA Level 1 varied widely between colleges as might be expected from the geographic spread and from variations in the percentage of the student population screened. Figures available indicated between 20% to 75% of new students were performing at a low level in terms of basic skills. In two colleges approximately 75% of those screened were below Level 1 and there were 50% in another college. These figures are indicative of the massive scale of demand for basic skills support across the sector.

Take-up of learning support

Despite the growth in learning support and a shift towards methods of delivery agreed with programme teams, there was still a significant gap between needs identified and learning support taken up. The highest level of take-up was approximately 50% of those students identified in one college and the lowest was approximately 20%. Partnership teaching and other methods of integrating the support into programme areas had a much higher strike-rate and were perceived to be altogether more successful. There was a spin-off success factor in that relationships with specialist staff developed in programme areas helped overcome prejudice which might have prevented students from attending specialist locations for support. The use of centres and workshops improved where collaborative work with programmes was strong and effective.

Learning support accommodation

Seven colleges identified improvements in accommodation, materials and equipment as learning support work developed and was better recognised and

***Figure 4*: Retention on monitored courses (as of February 96)**

Name of course	GNVQ Foundation Health & Social Care	C & G 224 Electronics Pt 1	NVQ2 Engineering	GNVQ Intermediate Health & Social Care	BTEC 1st IT	GNVQ Hospitality & Catering Advanced	GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care
Method of delivery of Additional Support	Piggy-back on tutorials & team teaching in core skills workshops	Team teaching in practicals (voc specialist)	Partnership teaching (voc specialist)	Piggy-back on tutorials & team teaching in core skills	Double staffing Business World & Numeracy Sessions	Delivered by Course Tutors	Piggy-back on tutorials & team teaching in core skills sessions
Number of Students NOT receiving Additional Support	87	16	11	87	81	?	35
Percentage retained	61%	87.5%	55%	57.5%	73%	?	46%
Number of students receiving Additional Support	18	4	4	18	30	6	11
Percentage retained	100%	100%	100%	100%	87%	67%	73%

FEDA project – *Evaluating approaches to learning support*

valued as a college-wide service. This was confirmed by positive feedback from students. Two colleges indicated that students considered they had insufficient access to computing facilities or appropriate software.

Provision integral to programmes

As stated above, all colleges recorded positive benefits of close liaison with programme teams, signalling collaborative, integrated approaches to learning support as the most significant factor influencing effectiveness. Models included partnership teaching work, support integral to tutorial time and specialist support within vocational time. Groups based in learning centres were more effective if a programme tutor was involved. Although specialist support outside a programme was valued, most colleges had moved towards more learning support work structured into programmes. Evidence from three colleges indicated improved retention in learning support through this shift in approaches, one example showing improvement from 13% (1994–95), to 60% (1995–96). One college also recorded that 80% of ALS units generated come from partnership or in-programme models. A much higher proportion of students (67%) who received support in learning centres did not accrue sufficient learning support time to trigger additional support unit funding.

Effect of learning support on student retention

There are strong indications that learning support improves student retention and achievement. Retention rates recorded for learning support sessions, especially where it was delivered in conjunction with the programme, averaged 70% or over. Figures for five programmes which were studied in one college show over 80% retention. Another college undertook a detailed analysis of seven programmes, with 435 students across the range of college disciplines comparing the retention of the students receiving learning support with that of others on the programme. Overall, 75% of students receiving learning support completed the programme, while only 52% of those not receiving support stayed. Retention for all the students for one or two of these programmes was poor but, with the exception of one case, retention rates were significantly higher for those receiving support.

Student survey responses and case studies also provided evidence that learning support contributed to student staying power. A student who had missed some time and started to fall behind in work commented that learning support helped him to plan and re-schedule his work. He completed his GNVQ programme. Another student was identified by staff as likely to drop out. He attended more sessions of learning support than any other sessions on his programme and attributed his successful completion to the way work was monitored in learning support sessions, in this case, integral to tutorial work.

Learning support and student achievement

The information from staff and student surveys was generally clearer on the relationship between learning support and students' progress and achievements, than for retention. There was evidence from student reviews on programmes that support was helping learners achieve. Most colleges provided evidence from case studies, course team meetings and reviews. All demonstrated a positive impact on achievement levels.

The results shown below came from a college where 61 students from five programmes responded to a specially designed questionnaire:

- A total of 100% considered that learning support had helped them to monitor their progress and meet deadlines.
- A total of 93% considered they had gained support in completing assignment work.

Students' comments on learning support include:

- 'It has helped me improve my work. It's getting better.'
- 'It helps me plan . . . If we did not have it I don't think we'd get anywhere.'
- 'I think it's appropriate to pass the course.'

Staff responses from two other colleges indicated improvements in the quality of the following:

- spelling and paragraphing skills
- confidence
- grades.

The college study of five programmes referred to above also analysed students achievements, identifying the number of course components or units attained. Rates of achievement were poor for several courses but students receiving learning support achieved an overall average of 3% or 0.6 units more

than those not receiving support. On one course the rate of achievement was 18% better. Put in the context that the students receiving support had been identified as *un*likely to succeed, the effect of the learning support was to draw their achievements up to, and *above*, those of their peers, who had been identified at the outset as likely to succeed.

Value of learning support

Staff and student responses to questionnaires added significantly to the information drawn from the outcomes already outlined above. This reflected the different choices made about areas for questioning. Surveys produced a range of information on specific aspects of each college's learning support service, identifying some unexpected areas for improvement and action.

In general, both students receiving support and programme staff whose students were taking up support, provided positive feedback on learning support provision. In one student survey, the majority of responses rated most aspects of learning support as good (4) on a scale of poor to excellent (1–5). These included:

- enabling deadlines to be met
- achieving assignments
- developing grading evidence
- meeting short- and long-term goals.

Comments included:

- 'enjoyable'
- 'helpful'
- 'useful'
- 'it worked well'
- 'it helps you catch up'.

In two other surveys, students commented on:

- the usefulness of the support programme
- help received with coursework
- improved confidence
- getting better about asking for the right help
- improvements in English and Maths skills
- the relevance of materials.

Some critical feedback on specific aspects was also received. Where students considered aspects unhelpful it appeared to relate either to a specific aspect of support, for example, the numeracy tutor and fractions, or issues such as insufficient computer access.

Generally, staff responded positively on questions of the effectiveness of support on:

- the usefulness of information from initial student assessment
- link and referral procedures.

Comments from staff identified individual students who had achieved better grades on assignments and got more out of the programme as a result of learning support provided. Case studies also provided valuable information on the success of specific support in relation to individual students.

A survey of staff in another college found that 50% of staff were unaware of referral processes and over 50% doubled the value of the screening process. Not surprisingly, this was a college where 60% of those students identified by initial assessment as having support needs, had not taken up support. Most colleges emphasised the value of the evaluation in helping them to identify both strengths and priorities for action to improve services for learners.

Value of different models

The most successful model is the one that works for the students and the programme.

This was a common message from all the college studies. Learning centres were seen as valuable for more motivated students with generally higher levels of study skills who could drop in and access materials they needed. In one particular college both A-level students and GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced students clearly benefited from a flexible learner centre provision which catered for taught sessions, alongside individual surgery appointments and drop-in support services. Flexibility in staffing and support systems is key to the success of specialist centres.

For less confident learners in a large multi-site college, support structured into the programme had been adopted as a more effective model. Most colleges regarded learning support integrated into the programme as the most effective approach.

Nevertheless, specialist support workshops were identified as valuable by individual students where programme staff referring students had themselves been positive about the value for the student. In one college's survey on the effectiveness of different models, some replies from mainstream staff who referred students to basic skills support included comments on students having the opportunity to work on basic skills away from the pressures of the course. In this particular case a clear preference for a specialist to deliver learning support, and a small preference for locating the delivery outside a main-

stream setting was identified. This needs to be seen as a contrast with all the other colleges which emphasised the need for integration of support into programmes and included comments that students would be reluctant to access support in other locations or in extra time. Data collected on take-up and retention also illuminates the success of more integrated models.

Key issues

- Initial assessment processes are identifying a high volume of support needs.
- At their best, colleges identified were only supporting one in every two students with identified support needs.
- Provision which is integrated into the programme area is most effective in take-up and in achieving positive outcomes.
- Learning support does have a positive impact on student retention and achievement.

Future developments

All colleges confirmed the value of the FEDA project in:

- providing a stimulus for development
- providing the opportunities to share and examine developments and practices in learning support in a range of colleges
- promoting and disseminating interest in developing learning strategies
- ensuring a close study and evaluation of aspects of their work in this field, which has allowed them to consolidate effective practice and plan improvements and the next stage of development.

Most colleges found the time span of the project too limited to fulfil all aspects of their initial plans, especially the evaluative processes proposed. Colleges identified strengths to consolidate and a range of strategies on which to move forward in the next year. Most colleges identified the need to improve monitoring procedures, both to assure quality and to measure effectiveness in relation to take-up, retention, progress and achievements.

Most colleges included extending and improving systems to provide evidence of value in the next stage of development. A range of other improvements were identified:

Culture and organisation

- Continued work on college cultures to ensure learning support becomes an entitlement for all learners
- Improving the clarity of objectives, the understanding of services provided and their relationship to funding
- Embedding learning support systems further into existing structures, systems and practices to improve and extend ownership
- Improving internal publicity and communication on learning support
- Extending and enhancing the practical collaboration and ownership of programme teams
- Promoting a culture which encourages and supports students in the management of their own learning
- Improving the overall coherence of learning support provision by maximising the potential of the many and various specialist staff across the college
- Clarifying distinctions between learning support and *additional* learning support

Information systems, recording and monitoring

- Improving planning and estimating need
- Refining and improving recording and monitoring systems
- Improving information support available through management information systems, including better access to achievement outcomes
- Maintaining accurate aggregate and individual records of the outcomes of initial assessment to ensure a better college and individual response to needs
- Improving recording systems for drop-in students
- Supporting further studies of learning support
- Undertaking parallel studies to analyse aspects of the variables which also influence student outcomes

Delivery

- Refining and improving methods of delivery
- Increasing the volume of support which is at the same time integrated and specific

- Extending learning support strategies to programmes not currently involved
- Improving curriculum, resources and materials available
- Developing study skills packs for individual study
- Developing IT and multimedia approaches
- Improving clarity of roles of specialist support and vocational staff

Staff development

- Extending staff training for specialists and vocational staff, including use of modular and customised programmes
- Improving the effectiveness of initial assessment and referral through further staff training
- Extending staff development in interpersonal skills training, recognising that effective partnerships often depend on effective team relationships
- Promoting staff development events to attract staff across disciplines to share ideas on learning styles

Resourcing issues

- Extending learning support across all sites
- Investigating improved flexibility in logging ALS units where students' needs for support are short-term or less regular than may currently trigger levels of funding
- Devolving estimated budgets
- Developing studies on cost-effectiveness

Concern with interpretations of funding ALS and the clearest and most practical ways of administering and recording learning support have continued to be a focus for discussion among participants in this project and at FEDA national conferences held on learning support.

9 Recommendations

It is hoped that colleges will be able to learn from commentary and key issues identified in each section of the report, from examples used throughout the text and from future developments highlighted by project colleges and reproduced on page 41 of this document. In this final, brief section of the report we set out key recommendations emerging from the findings of project colleges.

Colleges need to:

- understand learning support developments in the context of both national developments and local learning needs
- recognise the cultural transitions needed in the organisation and the forces that affect them
- clarify college policy relating to support as an entitlement for *all* learners and the responsibility of *all* staff.
- ensure that *all* staff understand and work to implement college policy
- identify clear objectives for learning support.
- offer learning support as an entitlement for all learners
- establish clear systems and structures with space for innovation
- devise and communicate effective implementation strategies which encompass a diversity of models of delivery tailored to need
- ensure effective liaison, organisational support and information exchange
- involve programme teams in planning and implementing support strategies which are course congruent
- develop both specialist and mainstream staff
- develop a culture of critical self-evaluation to continuously develop the quality of learning support provision.

Learning support services have grown markedly in a few years and are making a positive difference to outcomes for many students participating. Colleges need to continue to:

- use initial assessment processes appropriately to identify learning needs
- improve the overall take-up of learning support
- increase the involvement of mainstream staff in decision-making and implementation of support strategies and models
- monitor attendance, progress, retention and achievement of learners receiving support to measure effectiveness
- collect other evaluative evidence and case study information to measure the quality and value of learning support work.

10 References

Barwuah, A, M Green and L Lawson (1997) **Additional support, retention and guidance in urban colleges.** FEDA

Basic Skills Agency (1991) **The teaching of reading.** BDS

Brooks G, A K Pugh and I Schagen (1996) **Reading performance at 9.** NFER

Dearing R (1996) **Review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds.** SCAA.

Department of Education and Employment (1996) **Lifetime learning: a policy framework.** DfEE

Further Education Development Agency (1997). **Learning Resource Centres.** FEDA

Further Education Funding Council (1997) **Performance indicators (1995–96).** Stationery office.

Gorman T, C Fernandez (1996) **Reading in recession.** NFER

Green M, (1997) **Using Initial assessment to identify learners needs.** FEDA

Kennedy H (1997) **Learning works: widening participation in further education.** FEFC

Kennedy H (1997) **How to widen participation: a guide to good practice.** Stationery Office

Lunzer E (1979) **Effective use of reading.** Heinemann

Lunzer E (1984) **Learning from the written word.** Oliver & Boyd

National Committee on Education (1996) **Success against the odds.** Routledge

Reynolds D, S Farrell (1996) **Worlds apart?** Stationery Office

Tomlinson J (1996) **Inclusive learning.** Stationery office.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Additional support – staff questionnaire

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT - STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

ALL INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL

Date: ...../...../ 96

Courses you are involved in: .....

.....

.....

1) Do you know the procedure for referring a student for additional literacy and or numeracy support into Online? Y ☐ N ☐

2a) During this academic year have you referred any students for additional support into Online? Y ☐ N ☐

2b) If yes - how many students have you referred for Literacy? ☐ for numeracy? ☐

2c) If yes - have your students found the support they have received beneficial? Y ☐ N ☐

2d) If yes to 2c - can you please briefly note the reasons for your answer:

.....

.....

.....

3a) Did you screen your students using the ALBSU literacy / numeracy skills test? Y ☐ N ☐ NOT ALL ☐

3b) What information did you expect to get from the screening?

.....

.....

.....

3c) Given your answer to 3b - how useful have you found the screening exercise?

.....

.....

.....

4a) In what ways do you think additional support should be provided?
(you can specify more than one choice)

Student self-access of support material in the Learning Development Centre ☐
Course tutors trained to deliver literacy and numeracy support ☐
Specialist literacy and / or numeracy staff in a workshop such as Online ☐
Specialist literacy and / or numeracy staff in the Learning Development Centre ☐
Specialist literacy and / or numeracy staff working with you in class ☐

Other (please specify)

.....

.....

.....

4b Can you briefly note the reasons for your choice(s) in 4a

.....

.....

.....

5) Have you ever been into Online? Y ☐ N ☐

6) Do you know what support materials are used in Online? Y ☐ N ☐

7) What do you see as the role of a specialist literacy / numeracy workshop such as Online? (you can specify more than one choice)

- A teaching base for additional support ☐
- A resource base ☐
- A Word processing base ☐
- A base from which to get advice on supporting students in need of literacy and / or numeracy support ☐
- Other (please specify)

---

8) Would you like an introduction to the Online resources and staff? Y ☐ N ☐

9) Any other comments

Please make any comments/suggestions you may have regarding Additional Support:

Thankyou

Appendix 2: Course checklist

COURSE CHECKLIST

1 General Course Information

How is the course structured?

	yes	no
modules	☐	☐
taught	☐	☐
practical	☐	☐
open learning	☐	☐
work placement	☐	☐
communication input	☐	☐
numeracy input	☐	☐

other .....

What is your input? .....

.....

2 Teaching Styles

a Which teaching styles are used on the course?
Do they include

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
lectures			
research projects			
notes			
OHP			
handouts			
demonstrations			
dictation			
discussion			
worksheets			
packages			
videos			

other .....

Any comments .....

.....

b Are technical terms used on the course?

	yes	no
specialist words	☐	☐
academic language	☐	☐

(give examples) .....

Any comments .....

.....

© National Support Project for Colleges

3 Assessment

How is the course assessed?
Does the assessment include

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
pre-set tests			
exams (interim or final)			
continuous assessment			
assignments or project work			
practical			
oral presentation			
placement component			
portfolio			

other .....

Any comments .....

.....

4 Learner Requirements

a Practical skills

(i) Is equipment used? Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Occasionally ☐

What is used? .....

.....

Is prior knowledge necessary? yes ☐ no ☐

Any comments .....

.....

(ii) Do learners need to be aware of Health & Safety measures? yes ☐ no ☐

Any comments .....

.....

(iii) Do learners have to translate verbal or written instructions in to action?
Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Occasionally ☐

Any comments .....

.....

b Personal Skills

(i) Do learners deal with the public or have to communicate with others?
Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Occasionally ☐

© National Support Project for Colleges

(ii) Do learners need to be aware of:-

	yes	no
formal and informal communication	☐	☐
appropriate vocabulary	☐	☐
body language	☐	☐
social skills	☐	☐

Any comments .....

.....

(iii) As part of the course do learners need to work in a group?

Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Occasionally ☐

And do:	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
group discussion			
role play			
group assignments/practical tasks			

other .....

Any comments .....

.....

c Communication Skills

(i) **Reading**

Do learners need to read:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
textbooks			
manuals			
journals			
handouts/worksheets			
statistics (graphs)			
blackboards/whiteboards/OHPs			
trade literature			
self access materials			
notices			
written instructions			
reports			
packs			

other .....

© National Support Project for Colleges

(i) **Note-taking**

Do learners need to take notes:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
from blackboard			
from dictation			
from a written source (eg textbook)			
from a demonstration			

other .....

(iii) **Writing**

Do learners have to write:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
memos			
notes			
essays			
reports			
letters			
instructions			
descriptions of practical work			
answers to questions			

other .....

(iv) **Numeracy Skills**

Do learners need to be able to use:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
4 rules of number (+ - x ÷)			
decimals			
fractions			
money			
weights and measures			
percentages			
averages			
ratio and proportion			
area			
volume/capacity			
time			
graphs/tables			
use of calculator			
algebra			
geometry			
trigonometry			

other .....

© National Support Project for Colleges

(v) **Oral/aural Skills** (speaking and listening)
Do learners need to be able to:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
give clear explanations/descriptions			
use correct sequencing			
use appropriate vocabulary			
answer the telephone			
give messages			
work at the reception			
understand spoken instructions			
give clear instructions			

other .....

d **Research Skills**
Do learners need to use:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
library			
reference books			
dictionaries			
journals			
catalogues			

other .....

e **Information Technology**
Do learners need to be able to:-

	Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally
use a keyboard			
read computer printouts			
do basic word processing			
obtain information			
use spreadsheets			
use a database			

other .....

© National Support Project for Colleges

Appendix 3: A-level studies – self-assessment checklist

Study Skills

A Level Studies - Self Assessment Checklist

Name .....

Date ..... Tutor Group .....

How well do you feel you can use the following study skills? Grade yourself as honestly as you can. You will need to discuss any weak areas with your tutor.

	Need to improve			Good		Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitude and Motivation						
• Self management (setting goals, assessing your own progress)						
• Paper management (organising notes, cross referencing)						
• Revising (weekly, in preparation for exams)						
Time Management						
• Planning (planning ahead, prioritising tasks)						
• Meeting deadlines						
Research						
• Information seeking (Library, CD Rom)						
• Extracting key points (from books, articles, talks and lectures)						
• Note-taking (from text, audio, video or lessons)						
Analysis						
• Analysing (breaking things down)						
• Summarising						
• Evaluating						
• Argument (support or refute propositions)						
Communication						
• Using different formats (oral presentation,report, extended essays)						
• Understanding questions (exams, essays,research)						
• Discussion skills						
• Paragraphing/organising ideas						
• Grammar/sentence structure						
• Spelling/punctuation						

Any other useful information?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix 4: Staffing chart

STAFFING CHART

The staffing patterns, line management and timetabling responsibility are shown on the chart below:

Learner Support Programme Area	Adult Basic Skills	Vocational Programme Areas
Staffing		
2 x F.T. Management Spine who do the bulk of the liaison work and some teaching 1 x F.T. 2 x fractional - 0.5/0.2 • All qualified and experienced in Basic Skills and specific learning difficulties Core Team of 6 P.T. staff • Long experience and qualification in Basic Skills	3 x F.T. staff used on an occasional basis • All staff experienced and qualified in Basic Skills	6 x Vocational tutors: • Have appropriate inter-personal skills • Knowledge of vocational context • Usually no training or experience in teaching basic skills
Organisation/Line Management		
Through Programme Area Leaders Learner Support	Through Programme Area Leader, Basic & Community Education	Through Programme Area Leader for Vocational Area
Timetabling		
Timetabling by PALs Learner Support. Done after liaison with vocational areas. The aim is to provide support at times convenient for the students.	Provision is timetabled at the beginning of the year by PAL Basic & Community Education. Provision is available at various times, but this is fixed. There may be problems if the student's timetable changes.	Timetabled by P.A.L. for vocational area in liaison with Learner Support to coincide with times convenient for the students. Staff times may be changed or staff withdrawn according to the priorities of the vocational area.

Appendix 5: Study centre questionnaire

Study Centre Questionnaire
Winter 1995

Please help us to help you.
Complete the questionnaire; feel free to add any comments you think would help.

Thank you.

Section 1 - about you the student. Everyone should answer this section.

Your Tutor group _____

Programme of study...

- ☐ A levels (please specify) _____
- ☐ Advanced GNVQ (please specify) _____
- ☐ GCSE (please specify) _____
- ☐ Intermediate GNVQ (please specify) _____
- ☐ Foundation GNVQ (please specify) _____

1. Have your tutors encouraged you to use the Study Centre?

Subject tutors ☐ yes ☐ no

Group Tutors ☐ yes ☐ no

Senior Tutors ☐ yes ☐ no

If you have never used the Study Centre please answer section 6 and hand this in to your Group Tutor.

Section 2

2. Do you use the Study Centre

☐ during private study sessions ☐ during timetabled sessions

☐ during lunch breaks

3. How often do you use the Study Centre?

☐ almost every day ☐ roughly once/twice each week ☐ not regularly

4. How did you learn about the Study Centre?

☐ from friends ☐ from tutors ☐ by accident

☐ other please specify _____

5. Do you find the Study Centre comfortable to work in? ☐ yes ☐ no

If not please comment

6. Do you find the Study Centre a good place to work? ☐ yes ☐ no

If not please comment

Section 3 - drop-in

7. Do you ***drop-in*** to use the Study Centre

- ☐ to use the computers
- ☐ as a place to study
- ☐ to seek help from staff
- ☐ to use support materials
- ☐ to borrow equipment
- ☐ to meet other students to chat

8a. Have you used support materials in the Study Centre?

☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ rarely ☐ never

8b. If yes did you find the materials

☐ very useful ☐ quite useful ☐ not very useful ☐ not useful at all

9. Did you find using the Study Centre

☐ very useful ☐ quite useful ☐ not very useful ☐ not useful at all

Section 4 - timetabled sessions

10. How many hours per week are you timetabled to the Study Centre?

☐ 1 hour ☐ 2 hours ☐ 3 hours ☐ more than 3 hours

11. Do you use these sessions to

☐ work on assignments ☐ get support from maths/English staff

☐ other - please specify _____

12. Do you find these sessions

☐ very useful ☐ quite useful ☐ not very useful ☐ not useful at all

If you have never used staff support in the Study Centre answer section 6 and then hand this questionnaire to your Group Tutor.

Section 5 - Study Centre staff

13. Did you find staff available at the time you needed them

☐ always ☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ rarely ☐ never

14. Did you find the support you received

☐ very useful ☐ quite useful ☐ not very useful ☐ not useful at all

15. Did you find the staff friendly and supportive?

☐ always ☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ rarely ☐ never

Section 6 - Your comments

How would you like to see the Study Centre improved? ***(Feel free to continue over the page.)***

FEDA publication series

Developing FE: Volume 1

1 Student tracking
2 Caseloading
3 Assessing the impact: provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities
4 Adults and GNVQs
5 On course for next steps: careers education and guidance for students in FE
6 Marketing planning
7 Managing change in FE
8 The effective college library
9 Appraisal in FE – where are we now?
10 Clarity is power: learner outcomes, learner autonomy and transferable skills

FEDA Reports (formerly Developing FE): Volume 2

1 Investing partners: further education, economic development and regional policy
2 Women at the top in further education
3 Moving into FE: the voice of the learner
4 Additional support. retention and guidance in urban colleges
5 Qualifications for the future: a study of tripartite and other divisions in post-16 education and training

FE Matters: Volume 1

1 Environmental education throughout FE 1: policy and strategy
2 Environmental education throughout FE 2: a model and unit of environmental learning outcomes
3 Colleges working with industry
4 Towards self-assessing colleges
5 Evidence for action: papers prepared for FEFC's Learning and Technology Committee
6 Student retention: case studies of strategies that work
7 Getting the credit: OCN accreditation and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities
8 Moving on from Key Stage 4 – the challenge for FE
9 Monitoring student attendance
10 Educational psychologists in further education
11 Assuring coherence in individual learning programmes
12 Adult learners: pathways to progression
13 A real job with prospects: supported employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities
14 Transforming teaching: selecting and evaluating teaching strategies
15 Information and learning technology: a development handbook
16 Delivering Modern Apprenticeships
17 Planning a merger of FE colleges
18 Tackling drugs together: addressing the issues in the FE sector
19 Security is not an option – learning in a safe environment
20 Give us some credit: achieving a comprehensive FE framework

FE Matters: Volume 2

1 Youth work in colleges: building on partnership
2 The shrinking world: international links with FE
3 A sense of achievement: outcomes of adult learning
4 Learning with business: FE staff development to business and industry
5 Beyond responsiveness: promoting good practice in economic development

FEDA Bulletins: Volume 1

1 Quality assurance in colleges
2 The impact of voucher schemes on the FE curriculum
3 Enhancing GCE A-level programmes
4 Developing college policies and strategies for human resource development
5 Maintaining quality during curriculum change
6 Action planning and recording achievement
7 Implementing modular A-levels
8 Comparing content in selected GCE A-levels and Advanced GNVQs
9 Engineering the future: monitoring the pilot GNVQ in engineering
10 Charters in FE: making them work
11 Access to accreditation
12 Back to the future: what are Modern Apprenticeships?
13 Competing for business: colleges and the Competitiveness Fund
14 Information systems: a strategic approach
15 Strategic approaches to processes, cultures and structures

FEDA Bulletins: Volume 2

1 Partners in economic developement
2 Assuring quality in collaborative provision
3 Student stress in an FE college: an empirical study

FE matters

FE colleges are witnessing a major re-evaluation of the autonomy of the learner and what comprises successful learning strategies. At its most effective, learning support secures learners' access to effective learning throughout the mainstream curriculum. FEDA has tested models and strategies for learning support with eight colleges. This paper gives examples of strategies used by the project colleges and shows how learning support made a difference to those students who were able to take it up.

ISSN 1361-9977 FE matters Vol 2 No 6 Price £7.50

BEST COPY AVAILABLE